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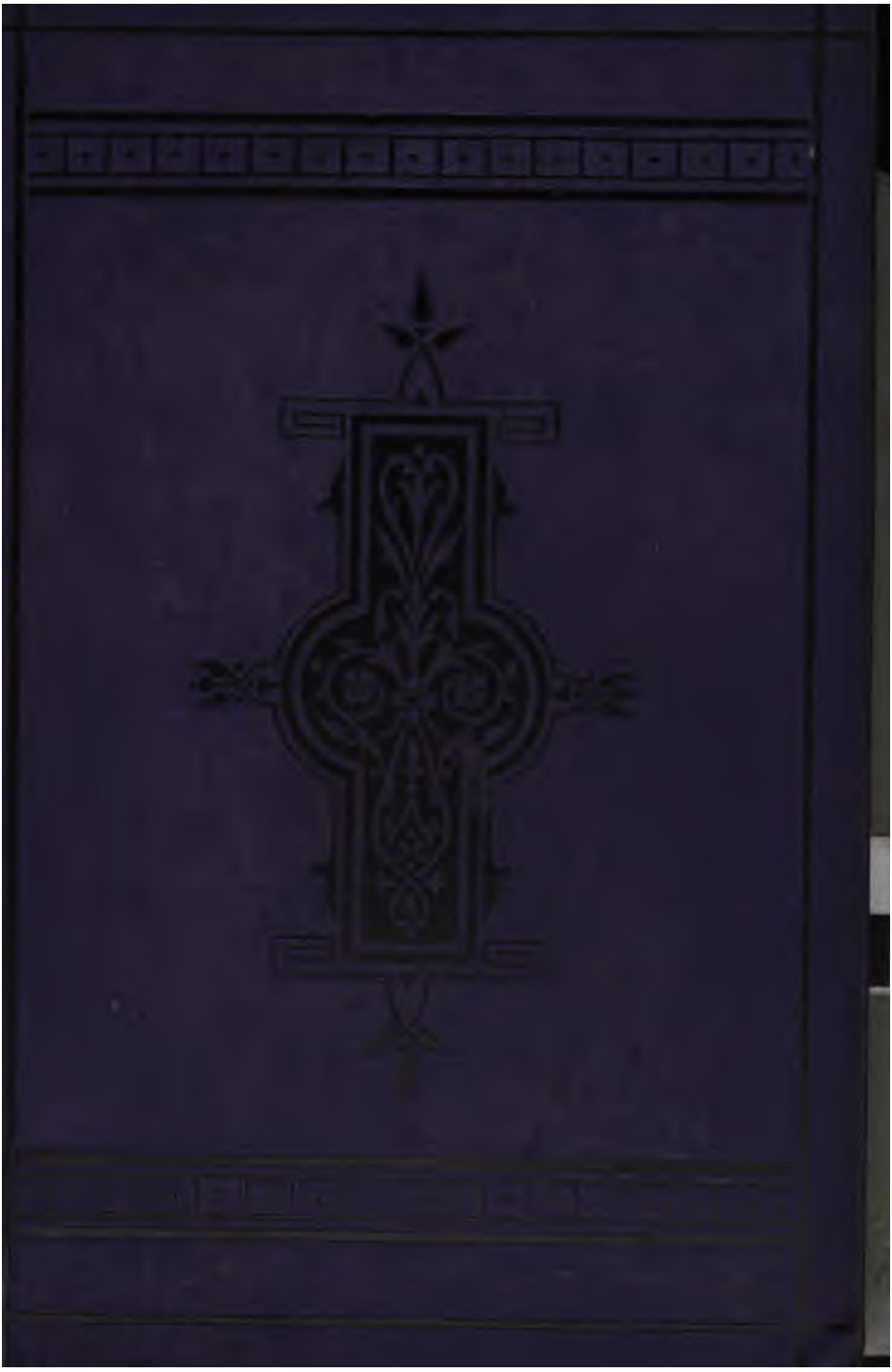

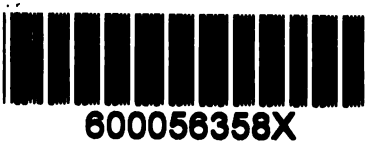
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CHEER OR KILL.

A NOVEL.

BY

ELINOR AITCH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

Vol. I.

LONDON:
CHARING CROSS PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED,
5, FRIAR STREET, BROADWAY, E.C.

1878.

251. f. 385.

PRINTED BY THE CHARING CROSS PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED,
5, FRIAR STREET, BROADWAY, LONDON, E.C.

CHEER OR KILL.

Water may quench the flaming fire,
  Put out the brand ablaze;
But the fire of love in mortal breast
  No power of earth allays.

Hot, hot is the summer sun,
  And who its heat can still?
Hotter far is the fire of love,
  And it must cheer or kill.

Axel and Walberg.

CHAPTER I.

JULIET VENINI.

CHEER OR KILL? Has love, then, only these two alternatives? No, no; even as I write the question, a crowd of patient woman-faces with

Lips long ago too tired to hide
The torture-lines where love has died,

and eyes grown haggard with watching, and

dim with weeping, yet raised with meek confidence and sure hope to Heaven come before me and the paper, like an army of spirit-martyrs, to bear witness to a truth for which they *lived*. Aye, lived, which was so much harder than to have *died*; as an indefinitely drawn-out, positive and possible agony is harder to bear than a quick keen certain pang. O, vision of women-martyrs, some on earth and some in Heaven, whom love did neither "cheer" nor "kill," but only purified—turn away your deep reproachful eyes from me while I write the record of a weaker heart. O, army of women, with spirits so pure and steadfast that even the master-passion itself was powerless to stain or warp them—turn your clear eyes away while I write the record of one spirit that under the same influence became so distorted and polluted as to lose all semblance of the bright bit of immortal essence it originally was. O, soul, so begrimed, so deformed, so ruined;

O, desperate, despoiled, and broken heart, was no mercy or hope found for thee on the earth or in the heavens? Thou whose happiness miscarried so woefully on earth, didst thou find none elsewhere? Hark! methinks I hear a sound of "rushing waters," "pure as crystal," and lo, the foulness, and the dust, and the sorrow are falling from thee like rags, and far away and mixed with angels' songs these words are ringing: "To whom much is forgiven" * * * *.

For the chief characters (in the chronicle I am about to write) I need offer no apology. Those whom Love deigns to "cheer" should be able to hold their own without preface or comment from me.

A short December afternoon is drawing to a close, and the deep duskiness of a winter twilight is settling down over the brilliant French capital, the streets and squares and boulevards of which are already beginning to

throw a glimmering gay defiance to the night in the shape of miles and miles, and myriads and myriads, of dimly-lighted lamps. In the little by-street of St. Marie, however, there is as yet no gleam of gas; the dusk reigns there unchallenged, as it does in a certain lodging-house that stands at the corner of the said unfashionable and benighted street. The landlady, Madame Fanile, is down in the kitchen cooking a "rèpas" for the salle à manger. "Lisette," she screams as she stirs a pot full of some savoury mess—

"Have you taken up Mdlle. Fenini's supper?"

"No, Madame," a shrill voice answers from somewhere near at hand, and presently a slatternly, slip-shod girl of fourteen emerges from a stone passage or scullery.

"Take it up at once," commands the red-faced Madame Fanile, as she lifts the simmering saucepan off the fire, and proceeds to empty its savoury-smelling contents into a

dish. "The poor thing must be fainting with hunger; she has had no tea, and in half an hour she starts for the theatre," she adds, indicating a tray upon which is placed a roll, a mutton-chop, and a glass of water.

"I'm half afraid to take it," says the girl, with an awed look upon her sharp, dirty face. "I've been up to her three times already this afternoon with Mons. Machelet's compliments, and he would be very much obliged if she would stop walking up and down her room (which is just overhead of his apartments) for half an hour, as he was engaged in some important writing, and he could'nt get on with it while his table was shaking like a jelly; and when I gave the message she said nothing, but just glared at me."

"She was practising her part for to-night," suggests Madame Fanile.

"A funny part, for she did nothing but tramp backwards and forwards through the room like a mad thing," mutters Lisette, as

she lifts the tray in her long skinny arms, and passes out of the kitchen.

She toils steadily up three pairs of stairs, and then she pauses a minute or two, listening, before she ascends the fourth flight. Yes, it is still going on. Tramp, tramp, tramp. The girl's dirty face pales, and the tray shakes in her thin arms, as she leans against the wall.

"She is at it still. Holy Mary preserve us! I daren't go in. I'll knock, and leave the tray outside."

With this valiant determination, slip-shod Mdlle. Fanile proceeds up the fourth pair of stairs. Just as she reaches Mdlle. Venini's door the tramping ceases, and though she puts her ear to the key-hole, she hears no sound or movement within. She knocks. No answer. And then curiosity (the motive-power that moves the whole of French female anatomy) overcoming her fear, she opens the door and peeps in. The room is full of

shadow; she can see nothing at first. She opens the door wider, and makes a slight noise with the tray. Mdlle. Venini is kneeling by the low attic window examining something she holds in her hands by the last faint streak of dying daylight.

"Your supper, Mdlle. Venini," announces poor Lisette in a quavering voice.

Mdlle. Venini does not hear, apparently, for she does not move nor speak.

Lisette repeats the intimation in a louder voice, and advancing into the room, lays the tray noisily on the little deal table. With a wild start the kneeling figure springs to its feet, and Lisette sees the quick, bright flash of steel in the dim light, and *something* falls with a hard metallic ring on the uncarpeted floor.

"What do you mean by entering my room without leave?"

Before the first three words of the foregoing sentence were out of Mdlle. Venini's

mouth, Lisette was rushing headlong down the second flight of stairs.

Mdlle. Venini closes the door after her, and locks it; then stands with her hands clasped upon her breast looking at the gleaming *something* that is lying on the floor.

I will try and paint her as she stands there. Only a girl—only fifteen. An English girl of that age, is a child, wears short frocks and pigtails, and eats bread and butter, learns punishment lessons, trundles her hoop, comes down to dessert. Only fifteen, yet it is no unformed child's figure that stands in the deepening shadowy twilight with its hands upon its breast. It is no girlish passion that makes that full bust to rise and fall like the sullen after-swell of a tempest-tost sea. Juliet Venini looks up for a moment that we may see those deep-grey, deep-set eyes. Don't start and shrink, there *is* a terrible light in them, certainly; but then they are not eyes to waver or turn aside once they fix

themselves on a goal they have determined to reach; and to-night this woman has set her face hell-ward. What a handsome face it is, too; one can see that even in this dim light, with low broad brow, crowned with dark curly hair, and full, passionate lips, short nose—rather too short, the one defect in a face (the French artists were wont to say) which was otherwise perfect as a model for a Lucrezia's or Cleopatra's. Poor Juliet! how she did use to hate those hours passed in the stuffy, untidy studios of enthusiastic artists; how she used to hate the artists themselves, with their black velveteen coats and bald heads, and smeared hands; but she never has to sit for them now. She is an "artiste" herself—a promising member of Mons. Bastile's dramatic company.

And now I must leave her standing in the dusky attic of Madame Fanile's lodging-house, and turn back to the past of thirteen years ago.

What a bright blue sky! What sunny, crooked streets! What picturesque, irregular houses! What gay, good-natured faces! This is no English town, the sky that spans it is too blue; it is not French, the streets are too sunny; it is not German, the houses are too pretty; and it is not—yes, it is Italian, the faces are so gay, so debonnair! Is anyone ever unhappy; does anyone ever die in Florence? I do not think so. I—ah, what is that lying on those steps under that archway? A woman! Nay, not a woman; only the worn-out body of one. The spirit has left it but recently. Even now the dark eyes are open, and one of the poor dead arms encircles a little two-year child.

"*Maman, Maman, j'ai faim, j'ai grand faim,*" such a piteous little wail, and the child lays its soft baby hands entreatingly on the calm dead face.

"*Maman, reveillez j'ai faim, j'ai faim.*"

Music in the distance. The childs atten-

tion is distracted; it turns away from the quiet face, sucking its thumb and listening.

Presently a couple of strolling players saunter past. The man is singing a gay Italian canzonetta; the woman accompanies him on a tamborine. They pause before the quiet figure on the steps. The man stops singing, and the woman with the tamborine steps forward and closes the dark, sightless eyes. The little child looks into her face, and stretches out its arms with the same piteous cry—

"*J'ai si faim, et Maman est endormis.*"

The woman lifts it from the cold clasping arms, and holds it in her own.

"What is your name, my pretty one?" she asks in Italian; then in French, remembering that the child has spoken in that tongue.

"Juliet," lisps the baby voice, "*et j'ai faim.*"

"Put it down, and come along," says the man, resuming his song in a mellow tenor voice.

The woman does not heed him; she is busy feeding the child with a bit of bread she has found in her pocket. The man repeats the command, somewhat impatiently. She kisses it, and is about to comply, but the tiny arms cling round her neck so tight—so tight! No woman worthy the name can withstand the pleading of clinging, helpless baby hands. She is a woman, and worthy the name, though only a strolling player; and she turns to the man, and says, in the soft Italian language—

"I cannot, Urio. Poor motherless lamb, let me take her with us; at any rate till we find if there is any one to care for her."

He grumbles a little, but consents, and they wander on down the sunny street, their rich Italian voices blending in a duet as only Italian voices can blend. The child finishes its bun, then lays its little head on the woman's shoulder, and goes to sleep.

One more leaf out of the past and then I have done.

It is a *fête* day in the Champs Elysée, Paris; brass bands are braying, torches flashing, masks grinning in amongst the tall, dark trees of the Parisians' pretty playground. Let us push in amongst the crowd that is collecting round that tent with the flags stuck all over it. Ah, there is a play going on. Let us stay and watch. Three people are on the little impromptu stage. We have seen them all before, but the ten years that have past since then, and whitened the woman's dark hair, and bent the man's stalwart form, have also changed the babe of three years into a girl of thirteen. She is speaking now — passionately remonstrating with her father and mother, who are solemnly adjuring her to give up her absent lover, whom they declare to be a worthless *gamin*.

"*Mais, maman, mon père, je l'aime! Il est mon vie—sans lui je meurs!*"

Further scoldings and entreaties on the parents' part, and the father goes off the stage in a state of exasperation, vowing he will take

means to prevent his obdurate daughter ever setting eyes on her lover again. As soon as he has gone the daughter's face changes. All the defiance and hardihood vanish, and she throws herself, sobbing and writhing, at the feet of her stately, white-haired old mother.

"Mother, I would save him from himself; he is so desperate and desolate, without my love, he will be lost!"

The girl acts well. The women, aye, and the men, too, that are crowding round the little tent are wiping their eyes.

"Can you tell me who that girl is?" asks a gentleman, who has been leaning against a tree, intently watching the little play, but who has not been wiping his eyes, nor blowing his nose, nor indulging in any other gesture indicative of violent emotion.

"She is Juliet Venini, a French girl. Those are not her parents; they picked her up somewhere—a waif—a stray."

This voluble piece of information is poured into his ear by a comely peasant woman,

whose eyes are still tearful, and whose nose is still red, but who smiles cheerfully notwithstanding. The gentleman bows, smiles, thanks her, "*mille fois*," and remains standing against the tree, watching the girl keenly till the play is over. He then makes his way to the beflagged tent, and lays the following proposal before the astonished trio—

"I have seen mademoiselle act. I will give her an engagement at my theatre. I will introduce her to the public, and furnish her with the histrionic instruction she stands in need of for nothing. I am Mons. Bastile, manager and lessee of the Theâtre de ——, Rue de St. Jean, at your service."

Questions are asked and answered. It is clearly a grand opening for poor, friendless Juliet. The man objects; Juliet brings them money; Juliet is only beginning to pay back now some of the cost of her useless childhood; but the pure, unselfish love of the woman conquers, as it conquered that long ago day in sunny Florence.

"Urio," she says, laying a gentle, tremulous hand on her husband's shoulder, "we love our dear adopted daughter too well to stand in her light. We are sorry—so sorry to—lose her"—a piteous faltering in the soft voice—"but we will accept this kind gentleman's offer—is it not so?"

The man does not answer; and the woman, who as been more than a mother to destitute Juilet, leads the girl forward, and places her hand in that of Mons. Bastile's.

"Take her, Monsieur; and be good to her, for she is friendless and orphaned, and —"

The poor woman bursts into tears, and Juliet clings round her neck and vows she will not leave her *Madre* for all the Mons. Bastiles and theatres in the world. But before the following morning she has signed a compact binding her apprentice to M. Bastile for three years, and her *madre* and *padre* are already journeying back to sunny Florence.

CHAPTER II.

LOVE'S CURSE.

"I *will* possess him, or will die.
I will grow round him in his place;
Grow—live, die looking on his face;
Die—dying clasped in his embrace."

It is time to return to the silent figure we left standing in the attic chamber of Madame Fanile's lodging-house. The hurried, panting breaths are growing quieter, and the clasped hands fall clenched and rigid from the heaving bosom. "He shall love me!" The words echo through the room, coldly and firmly, and Juliet stoops and picks up the flashing bit of steel lying at her feet. She passes her hot fingers along the edge and feels the savage-looking point, slowly reiterating the words, "He *shall* love me."

Ah, Juliet, Juliet! is a dagger a weapon with which to win love? Have you tried all the tender, innocent wiles of womanhood in

vain? Have all the sweet, warm flashes from those deep grey eyes utterly missed their mark. Has that low voice, passion-shaken, fallen only on indifferent ears? Have those full, pleading lips totally failed to wake a passion like that with which they tremble. If this is so—even if this is so—if your pretty woman's quiver hangs empty at your side; if all your gay, sweet arrows have been shot in vain; if from your hands, grown chilled and hopeless, your strong, bright bow of youth and beauty dangles useless—have you, then, wrestled mightily against this luckless love? Have you fought a good fight against it, night and day? Have you summoned the strength of your woman's pride, the vehemence of your girlish scorn, to aid you in the bitter war? Ay, ay, ay! she has done all this—and more.

"If I were not so inhumanly strong, I should have died under it long ago," she mutters, still feeling the dagger's edge. "But it does not matter, *she* will die to-night—die

by his hand! The same hand that caresses her hair to-night shall plunge the death in her heart. Oh God! how I envy her—envy her—*envy* her."

The weapon falls from the girl's grasp, and she covers her face and groans heavily, like a person half unconscious with pain. When she raises her head again, the calm, white light of the moon falls full on her face. She rises to her knees and stretches out her strong, young arms as if praying. The awful light dies out of her deep eyes, and they grow unutterably tender with the helpless passion of a mighty yearning, as she raises them to the moonlit sky.

"Bertram," she whispers, and her lips lose their rigid curves and tremble like a weeping child's, "you were kind to me once, before *she* came; you used to talk to me, and hold my hand; and once, when I was crying from loneliness and weariness, you raised it to your lips. You pitied me; you would have grown

to love me, if *she* had not come and turned your heart from me." The eyes grow dark with hatred, the lips resolute and cruel. "I will win my way to your love yet, though the path be through hell's fire!" Her hand, groping about for the dagger, comes in sudden contact with it, and the sharp point pierces her flesh. "You will be a murderer by accident, an offence for which you cannot be tried, and I will be a murderer on purpose, a fact which no one will be able to prove." A half-stifled cry bursts from her as she sees the blood upon the hand the dagger's point has wounded. "The hand he kissed! Oh, God! oh, God!" She shudders from head to foot in tearless horror. "A *murderer!* Oh, Bertram, if I could win your love by only *dying*—by killing my body instead of my soul—how gladly would I sheathe this dagger in my heart; yea, cover my body with ghastly, gaping wounds, if I thought you would come when I was dead and be sorry for me and pity me, and begin to love me for

sheer pity of my love. I should know it—ay, I should know it, and rejoice, were I in *hell!* But it would not be; she would never let you come; and you would not wish to, lying on her bosom and dallying with her golden hair. You would forget all about my body, lying disfigured and cold in this miserable hole, or only think of it with a shudder of disgust. No, no, it is from *her* you shall turn with sickening horror. It is the vision of her face, grown ghastly and ugly with death, you will ever try to forget by gazing on a fairer living one. It will be her lips, damp and lifeless, you will loathe to kiss, and turning from them, find others softer, younger, truer. From her heart, that will be throbless and icy, you will turn to one that only beats for you—burns for you—dies for you!"

A clock on a neighbouring church strikes seven, and Juliet starts to her feet, hastily puts on her cloak and hat, hides her dagger under the former, and descends the stairs with a firm, quick step.

CHAPTER III.

BERTRAM'S DEBUT.

"Never have I seen fouler death or fairer maid."
Buchanan.

To-NIGHT the young English actor, Mr. Messeter (by birth English, but by education French) is to make his *debût* on the stage, at Mons. Bastile's theatre. Perhaps it can hardly be called his *debût*, as he has already filled one or two unimportant rôles at that theatre, but it certainly is the first time his histrionic talents (if he has any) have had the least chance of becoming known to the public. It wants half-an-hour to the time the performance is supposed to begin, but Mr. Messeter is already dressed and waiting in the green-room, full of the impatient restlessness of nervous excitement. The gay, knightly dress he wears, sets off to great advantage the careless grace of his lithe young limbs. He is only one-and-twenty,

but he always passes for several years older than his age—partly by reason of the slight moustache that already darkens the upper lip of his handsome, mobile mouth, and partly because his manners are not savoured with the usual gentle compound of diffidence —shyness—and brusqueness which belong to the period of man's early youth—but are on the other hand as unembarrassed and perfect in their steady, easy nonchalence, as any travelled and forty year old Frenchman's. Yet, even waiving the question of manners and moustache, I think one would find it hard to believe that the large, dark-brown eyes, so comprehensive and unwavering, and resolute, had only looked out on this "fair, false earth" for twice ten summers.

"Just the sort of man that women go mad about," as I once heard a lady say of him; and when I wanted to know what sort of man that was, she seemed rather at a loss, but eventually finding her tongue (it was rather

a fluent one), she gave the following lucid definition:

"Why, don't you know? a young man who looks half again as old as he *really* is, who has the manners of a man twice as old, the conversation of a man three times as old; and yet has, at the same time, an undefinable but unmistakable air of youth about him."

"Your description is grandly suggestive, but a trifle vague," I replied, rather slightingly I'm afraid; and now I am humbled, for I want to describe him myself; and after sitting with pen in hand for half-an-hour, trying to clothe in words the peculiar attractive power he possessed over women's hearts—ay, and men's too—I am fain to confess that the good-natured, gossipping description that lady gave of him many, oh, so many years ago, is more satisfactory, and comes nearer the truth (which no words can exactly touch) in its careless, clever, womanly perception, than any long-winded, poetically

obscure, and obscurely poetical analysis that could be written. As for his face, it is perhaps not strictly handsome — the forehead is too high and broad—the nose does not follow the pattern either of the Roman or Grecian, or any other orthodox type of beauty, but is rough-hewn and undefined in shape; and, but the mouth is perfect; and by that superlative, I do not mean an effeminate rose-bud of a mouth, to which, I'm aware, the adjective just used, commonly refers. It is essentially manly in the bold, free curves of its smile; manly in its powerful composure, when passive; and yet, in some of its owner's moods, I have seen it grow as sensitively soft, and tremulously passionate, as that of a young girl's held up for her lover's first kiss.

"I don't know about 'an actor's nose,'" Mons. Bastile had said, when young Messeter had presented himself for that august person's approval; "but if there is such a thing as an actor's mouth, that young fellow has one.

Parbleu, Monsieur! if every other feature in his face were as stiff and hard as cast-iron, those lips of his could alone, without aid from any other part of his countenance, express, perfectly and fully, every passion and emotion that ever stirred in human breast." And he gave the young man an engagement then and there.

That the feature in question has not as yet brought him any reputation or success as an actor, is not perhaps either the feature's fault nor his own; for, as I remarked a few paragraphs back, he has not as yet been brought before the public in any rôle sufficiently important to warrant the notice of the critiques dramatiques. But, to-night! Ah, surely he will take the theatrical world by storm to-night! Success is flashing in his dark eyes, and the easy elegance of his attitude (as he stands leaning one arm upon the mantel-piece) is full of the conscious power and careless confidence of genius. He

has no one (save a young English doctor) to be anxious about him; no one to whom his success or non-success will make a difference. The only relation he possesses in the world is an old uncle with six children of his own, and who, though always kind and generous to Bertram, was somewhat relieved when the young fellow took to the stage, and to providing for himself.

As Bertram stands waiting, a note is put into his hand. He opens it. It runs as follows:—

"DEAR BERTRAM,—I wish to speak a few words to you before the play begins. I await you in my dressing-room, where we will be safe from intrusion.—Yours,

"MARIE DE MAILLY."

Mr. Messeter obeys the summons, and the next minute is knocking at Mdlle. de Mailly's door. He is bidden to enter, and Marie de Mailly, principal actress of Mons. Bastile's talented troupe, rises with outstretched hand

to welcome him. She is a beautiful woman, with a style of beauty very rarely met with in Frenchwomen, very fair, with sensitive, mobile features, and a great wealth of golden hair falling below her waist.

"Thank you for coming, Bertram," she says, seating herself on a gorgeous red-and-gilt sofa, and motioning the young man to sit beside her. "I wanted so much to speak to you about that poor girl Juliet. She has looked so unhappy lately—so—so *desperate*. I am quite afraid that she is meditating some rash step. You used to take an interest in her, I thought at one time, but you seem to have rather cast her off of late, and she has no one to advise her or care for her. Don't you think you could win her to tell you her trouble? I have tried, but she does not seem either to trust or like me."

Mr. Messeter stammers a little as he answers, and his dark cheek flushes slightly. "I don't think I could do her any good. She's an odd girl, very odd."

Mdlle. de Mailly looks keenly at him as he sits beside her. "Bertram," she says, after a pause, laying a kind hand on the young man's shoulder, "will you forgive an old woman for speaking plainly? I am twenty years older than you. Yes" (as he makes a gesture of dissent), "ten years of days and weeks and months, and the ten years I should be in advance of you, as a woman, if I were your age. There are some people one takes to instinctively, and I liked you, Bertram, the first time I saw you." Rather an unguarded admission for a beautiful woman to make to a handsome man, even if he *is* ten years younger. But these two understand each other, and though Bertram bends to kiss the soft, jewelled hand that rests on his arm, there is nothing the least lover-like in the action.

"I did not fear for you as I would have for another in your position, for I thought I recognised in you a nature too pure and true for even the baleful influence of the green-

room to sully or distort. I said to myself, 'Here is one I can trust to walk over the burning ploughshares of theatrical temptations unsinged and uncontaminated.' Tell me I was not mistaken in my first estimate of you, Bertram; tell me it is only green-room slander—tell me that the coarse inuendoes and vulgar hints and hateful whispers that I hear on all sides at the mention of either yours or Juliet's names, are nothing but the tittle-tattling spitefulness of jealous incapables. Tell me they have not been able to make you as dishonourable and immoral as themselves, Bertram, *Bertram.*"

The actress's sweet voice falters a little in spite of herself, and her large grey eyes fill with sudden tears; but the young eyes they encounter have no dimness nor shadow of shame in them; their dark depths are "clean as the palm of a hand." Mdlle. de Mailly's doubts and fears have half vanished before he begins to speak.

"Marie" (there is a pained thrill in the mellow voice), "I am sorry, more sorry than I can say easily, that you should require me to vindicate myself in this matter—sorry to think that the calumniating scandal of Mons. Bastile's troupe should be able to shake your faith in me; and sorrier to think that the only explanation I can give will lay bare the weakness of a heart which I have been doing my utmost to shield."

Bertram pauses, and his dark eyes grow very troubled, and his clear cheek flushes uneasily.

"You need say no more," says Marie, gently, her keen womanly instinct at fault no longer. "Juliet loves you, and you have done your best to make her hate you, and have succeeded about as well in your efforts as—as handsome young men usually do, eh?" and Mdlle. de Mailly smiles gaily in her relief and contentment. But the young actor does not respond either to her smile or question.

"I shall quit Mons. Bastile as soon as to-night's play has run its course, and try and find an engagement elsewhere," he says shortly.

"Oh, Bertram, is it necessary to do that?" asks Mdlle. Mailly in some dismay.

"Yes."

"Well, you know best. Poor girl—poor girl."

"You see, I think it was partly my fault" (a shy restraint in the voice)—"my clumsy officiousness. I was kind to her; took notice of her at first because I thought she was so lonely and young, and then—and—you see—you know."

"Yes, I see and I know," responds Marie de Mailly, with glistening eyes. "God bless you, Bertram; such as you are the salt of the earth."

The theatre is filling fast; there is a double attraction to-night. It is a "first night,"

and also the debût of a young English actor. The play is a tragic one; everyone is pulling a long face, and the ladies have brought an extra supply of scent-bottles and cambric pocket-handkerchiefs. The drop-scene rises slowly, and—but I am not going to describe the acting or the play. I am not a critic, either literary or dramatic; and I should be certain to make all sorts of crude and amateurish blunders were I to attempt the first, and were I to attempt the latter, I should give my critics an opportunity of cutting this unfortunate tale into fragments. "Any merit the tale may have is to our thinking completely whelmed in the gross ignorance betrayed in the second chapter as regards the description of a play. Now, to begin with"—and off they go. No, no, Messrs. Cutem and Slashem, I won't give you the chance; I can't afford it.

There is no doubt about it. The young French-Englishman in the rôle of Alfonse in

the tragedy of *Les Deux Amants*, is bringing down the house. The scent-bottles and cambrics come into play whenever he comes on the stage. Ladies are screaming and fainting, gentlemen blowing their noses and trying to cough loudly to prevent sobbing, and after each act the theatre rings with the name of "Alfonse! Alfonse!" It is nearly over now; the play is almost played out; the last act is drawing to a close; slowly the curtain is rising on the last scene but one. Marie is on the stage alone. She is Alfonse's bride. She is dressed in white, and her long bright hair is loose. She has fled to the world's end with him. She has given up all for love, and counted it well lost, for does he not love her, and will not they live happily in each other's love as long as their lives shall last? Ah! here he is. Alfonse comes on the stage, and his bride rushes to his arms; but what is this? He repulses her harshly; he upbraids her; he accuses her. She is false to him;

she loves another. She is already a wife—a mother; she must die. In vain the beautiful Marian declares her innocence and implores his mercy. He loves her too passionately to forgive her (thank Heaven, stage love is not real love; were it so our dailies would become mere chronicles of murders); she must die. The audience holds its breath. The cambrics are crushed into shapeless balls by rosy palms, and twisted and knotted round delicate jewelled fingers; and the scent-bottles roll neglected and forgotten from silk and satin laps while their owners lean forward to watch the figures on the stage. Ah, he cannot kill her; she is clinging round his neck. She kisses him; he flings her off. Ah, what a splendid attitude! She crouches at his feet, panting, beautiful. An awful look comes over Alfonse's face—a fearful mingling of love and hate. He advances nearer to her. She struggles to her knees, dumb with terror; her head is thrown slightly back; her dilated

eyes dwell with a horrible fascination on the face of her husband; her arms fall paralysed and powerless by her side. For an instant he pauses looking down at her. His hands seek the weapon by his side; one hand grasps the sheath, the other draws the dagger. There is a sudden flash of steel, and then, O God! what a cry! It is echoed instantly by half the theatre, and the people turn and look at each other to see who has fainted, or who has gone into hysterics. Thank heaven it is over! They don't mind being a little frightened and interested, but really, for the last few minutes, the tension has been so painful, the acting so appallingly realistic, &c., &c. Alfonse stands gazing for a little space at the prostrate form of his murdered wife. He is panting heavily from his late exertions, and he is a little perplexed. Marian has fallen on her face; he has never seen her fall like that before. It is certainly very effective, but at the same time a trifle awkward, for he

has to stand over her and utter a touching apostrophe to her dead face. However, here goes. As she has improvised, the best thing he can do is to follow suit. All the fierceness is vanishing from his face as he gazes; the eyes soften, the forehead droops, and the wonderful mouth, so stern and cruel a moment before, quivers piteously. "He is going to cry," the ladies whisper sympathetically. Slowly and softly, with bent head, he approaches the quiet figure lying prone upon the stage. He kneels beside it. He pushes back with tender hands the beautiful hair. "*Marian, ma bien-aimée.*" He raises her head, and for the second time that night a wild cry of mortal agony rings through the theatre. The ladies start to their feet, they can bear no more; they thought the screams were over. And oh! what is that awful purple stain upon the stage, and on Marian's white dress? And why is the drop-scene falling? But hush! hush! Mons. Bastile is

standing before the foot-lights, and trying hard to make himself heard.

"A slight accident—a mere scratch; but the lady being somewhat faint and shaken, it is thought as well not to continue the performance, and all he can hope is that the audience will forgive the slight contretemps and patronise the performance to-morrow night, and many succeeding nights."

A pause, and then follows the ominous clause:

"If there happens to be a surgeon in the theatre to-night, the lady would be obliged if he will kindly step this way."

CHAPTER IV.

AN AWKWARD BUSINESS.

> "There is nothing left . . . . to do for her,
> Except to hide our faces when she dies,
> And hold our sobs back lest they vex her soul
> Which ever grieved for grief of others."
>
> *Blind Love.*

A YOUNG English surgeon, a friend of Bertram Messeter's, by name Marble, who had come to see the former's debût, obeyed Mons. Bastile's summons, and made his way, as quickly as the crowd would permit, to the green-room. They have already drawn the dagger from her breast, and laid her on the couch in her dressing-room, and are standing round her with awed faces watching her young life ebbing away. The young surgeon pushes his way through the little group, and stooping over her, examines the ugly wound in the fair bosom, from which the blood is

oozing—oozing. His examination does not last long; he straightens himself abruptly. Bertram's dark eyes seek his face full of wild inquiry. Dr. Marble shakes his head, and Bertram, pushing him away, and kneeling down by the couch, puts his arm tenderly beneath Marie de Mailly's fair head. She is conscious now; she opens her wide grey eyes, and looks up at the white agonized face that is bending over her; but she does not shrink away. Her pale lips move—

"Some brandy," the doctor says, with his hand upon her failing pulse.

They give it to him, and he wets her ashy lips with it.

"Dying?" she articulates faintly.

No one speaks, but she looks up into the dumb eyes above her that burn and burn and cannot weep, and reads an answer there.

"Poor Bertram! how—how—"

"She wishes to know how it occurred," remarks the surgeon, pityingly. "Can you tell her, Messeter?"

Twice Bertram essays to speak, but no words will come.

"Some fiend," he mutters at length, in hoarse, harsh tones, "took the stage dagger from my scabbard, and replaced it with *this* (he raises his right arm and shows the fatal dagger, with a horrible dull stain upon it), which I swear by heaven and earth I'll sheath in the dastard heart of whoever has done this cursed deed, be it man or woman."

He lays down the fair head he supports, and rising, scans the frightened faces near him with a murderous gleam in his anguished eyes.

There is a slight stir, and, as he looks, a figure in a page's dress of purple velvet pushes forward to where he stands, and then kneeling down, folds back the doublet from a snowy bosom.

"Juliet!"

"Keep your oath!" the kneeling figure utters hoarsely.

He understands it all now! He grasps the key to the hideous tragedy—a woman's jealousy. A wild light crosses his brow; his eyes flame.

"By God, I will." He lifts the blood-stained blade.

"Are you mad, Messeter?" cries the young surgeon, seizing his arm. "How many more women do you wish to do for to-night?"

"Bertram," a faint voice utters from the couch. He obeys the summons instantly.

"Send these people away, all but Juliet and Dr. Marble."

The doctor repeats the dying lady's mandate, and in a few moments the room is cleared.

"Where is Juliet?" asks the sweet voice again. "I want to tell her—I forgive—her," and as the girl approaches she holds out a feeble hand to her. But Juliet does not touch it; she does not dare. She would as soon think of touching the hand of one of God's

most holy angels. "And, Bertram, I want you to forgive her, too." The beautiful grey eyes, growing dim with the coming shadow, turn to the young actor.

"Never!"

"You will try."

"Never."

"Bertram!"

"I will do anything else you ask me, Marie, but not that, not *that*."

"You will promise not to hurt or avenge this night's work upon her? You must promise, for my sake, Bertram; I command you."

There is a solemn urgency not to be withstood in the failing voice and glazing eyes of the dying actress.

"I promise, for your sake, to do her no hurt—to seek no revenge—for your sake, Marie—Marie," and the young fellow bows his forehead on the gentle death-struck hands, and quivers from head to foot with great tearless sobs.

"Thank you, Bertram, the forgiveness will come—I will leave it—with—God. And now I have only one thing more to say."

Her eyes close, her breath comes in short, quick gasps. Dr. Marble wets her lips with brandy, and tries to get her to swallow a little.

"You must not talk," he says, as he sees the white lips struggling to frame some word.

"But—I must; I have no time—to lose—Bertram."

"Oh, Marie, hush! do not try to talk, for pity's sake."

"I want to show how much—I trust—and honour you, my child" (Juliet starts wildly to her feet at the word, and comes nearer the couch, listening, with dilated eyes) "my little Marionetta—I leave her to you—to your care, Bertram. You will be good to her, and guard my little babe—my wee blossom; will you guard her?"

And Bertram looks into the dying eyes full

of a mother's tender, yearning love, and answers—

"With my life."

"She is not portionless, my little lamb; she will have enough—enough—," and then the low voice fails again, and Bertram, looking stedfastly into the grey eyes, sees a strange film overspreading them.

The doctor tries to make her drink something, but the power of swallowing has left her. "She is going fast," he mutters. A long shudder, a deep, deep sigh, and Marie de Mailly goes away for ever from this weariful world.

"Lay her down, Messeter," says the young doctor, gently, "lay the poor girl's head down—she is dead."

To his dismay (for he has a great regard for him) Bertram looks up and laughs in his face.

"Dead! my dear fellow; you don't expect me to believe that, do you? Why, if she

were dead, I'd have killed her, and you know very well I'd sooner cut my own throat than do such a thing. She acts so well, one would almost think her dead to look at her. Do you know" (in a confidential whisper) "she quite frightened me to-night; she looked so like death;" and he hugs the dead white face to him.

"Fetch me a glass of water," the doctor says to Juliet.

She is not long in bringing it, and then he takes a small bottle from one of his pockets, pours some of the contents in the glass of water, and approaches Bertram with it.

"Here, Messeter, drink this; the acting has fatigued you greatly. This will revive you," but Bertram only shakes his head, and hugs the poor dead face closer to his heart.

"Drink it," says Dr. Marble, authoritatively, and bending over the young actor, he holds the glass to his hot, fevered lips. The touch of the cold fluid is grateful to them, and they part involuntarily.

"That's all right," says the doctor, with a sigh of relief, as he puts down the empty glass; and then they stand watching him—Juliet and he.

The opiate (it was a powerful one) begins to take effect very soon. Bertram's head droops and droops, and his arms relax, and they sink together back upon the couch—the dead and the living, his cheek to her cheek, his heart to hers. Very still they lie.

"Is he dead?" asks Juliet in a hoarse whisper. She thinks he is; it seems the most fitting ending for the horrible drama in which she has played such a disastrous part, the most appropriate climax to her punishment, which began from the moment she saw Bertram on the stage kissing and moaning over the bleeding, insensible form which he held in his arms.

"Dead, no," answers the practical young doctor; "on the contrary, the morphia has saved his reason, and very probably his life."

He raises Bertram as he speaks, and, supporting him in his arms, looks round uneasily.

"We must get him out of this. The police will be after him, directly, poor fellow; I'm afraid" (nodding his head significantly at the dead actress) "it will be an awkward affair for him."

In an instant Juliet's faculties are on the alert. A plan forms itself in her brain in the twinkling of an eye.

"Necessity is the mother of invention," says the old saw. I don't believe a word of it; or if Necessity is the mother, Love is the father.

Juliet goes up to the doctor, and lays her hand upon his arm.

"There is danger for him?"

"Of course there is," responds the doctor, curtly.

"But it was an accident."

"Who's to prove it?"

"I."

"You. Much use your evidence would be."

"Why?"

"Why, because of a fact that is patent to everybody—because you love this man more than your life, you little idiot."

The horrible awkwardness of the predicament in which his friend is placed is making the young surgeon irritable.

"I have thought of a plan," says Juliet, steadily, speaking in English.

She has noticed Dr. Marble is not quite at home in the French language, and it is necessary that he should understand perfectly what she is about to say. She proceeds slowly, pronouncing every syllable distinctly.

"Carry Mons. Messeter in there (pointing to a little room adjoining Mdlle. de Mailly's dressing-room), take off his stage dress as quickly as you can, and throw it out here to me, and I will give you in this dress" (indicating the page's dress in which she is clad.)

"But—"

"Hush! there is no time to be lost; and don't forget his shoes."

"His dress will be too large for you."

"I will manage."

"Yours will be too small for him."

"It will not be noticed. I will give you a cloak to wrap him in, and you will carry him out of the theatre as Mdlle. Juliet, who has fainted at the sight of—. You understand. O, make haste!"

"But you—you—."

"I am the one who should suffer; I did the deed. In the name of Justice, I bid you go."

And Dr. Marble, being fonder of the young fellow than anyone else in Paris, and glad to seize any chance, however small, of extricating him from his present dilemma, takes him up in his strong arms without further ado, bares him into the inner apartment, and shuts the door.

Juliet picks up the young actor's plumed hat, and puts it on her head, pulling it well down over her face; and then she waits impatiently till the door shall be opened and the clothes flung out. She tries hard not to look at the white, still face on the sofa; but her eyes are irresistibly drawn towards it, and on the stained disfigured breast she seems to see a little golden-haired girl-child lying and sobbing, sobbing.

The door of the inner room opens, and Bertram's clothes are thrown out hastily, in which (after thrusting in her page dress, with a whispered entreaty to the doctor to make haste) she proceeds to array herself. It consists of a slashed velvet doublet, velvet tights, and black silk stockings, all much too large for her, for Bertram is five feet eight, and broad in proportion; and she, though above the average female height, is full four inches shorter. Her full-developed woman's figure fits anything but comfortably into Alfonse's

male-cut habiliments. However, she manages as well as she can, and as good luck will have it, there is a cloak pertaining to the costume, which, like Charity, covers a multitude of defects. She is just in the act of doffing it when Dr. Marble re-appears, carrying the would-be Juliet in his arms.

The young doctor is puffing a good deal, for, though a stalwart young man, he finds the ten-stone weight of unconscious mortality in his arms just about as much as he can manage. He has enveloped Bertram in the page dress somehow, that is all that can be said; his arms protrude a good half-yard beyond the sleeves, and the doublet refuses to button across his chest.

"Where is the cloak?" gasps the doctor.

Juliet goes to one of the wardrobes in the room, and takes from thence a black shawl, which she assists Dr. Marble in wrapping round the unconscious Messeter.

"Where are you going to take him to?" she asks.

"I don't know—I haven't settled—out of Paris as far as I can," the doctor puffs out.

"You will call a cab as soon as you are out of the theatre?"

"Yes. Good-bye, Juliet," he says, kindly, as she opened the door for him. "I hope you will get out of this mess all right."

Though as far as the young surgeon knows she has committed murder to-night, yet the girl's willing sacrifice, and the wild risk she is running for the man who does not care the smallest atom for her, touches him in spite of all.

Juliet does not answer his good-bye, or the subjoined wish. She takes up one of the unconscious hands lying across his shoulder, and presses her lips to it, quietly, passionately, despairingly.

CHAPTER IV.

MADAME FANILE READS THE PAPER.

"O God, deny me not this latest boon,
To heal him by my death
Whose life I hurt. To die for him, sweet doom!
For *him* to yield my breath!"

THE next day the whole of Paris is in a fever of excitement. All the journals, and gazettes, and dailies are vying with each other to see which can produce the largest type and most thrilling assortment of capital letters and points d'exclamations. I think the *Journale Dramatique* carries away the palm; though, perhaps, its triumph is hardly legitimate, as it has sought the meretricious aid of scarlet letters. From shop windows, on the backs of human advertising mediums, viz., men confined between two boards, terrifying an-

nouncements meet the eye, varying in forms of expression, yet all pointing to the same catastrophe. "Fearful case of woman-stabbing; murderer apprehended." "Tragic end to a tragedy at the Theâtre Francaise." "Shocking murder of a young and beautiful actress." "A stage dagger driven home," &c., &c., *ad infinitum.*

Madame Fanile having sent up her lodgers' breakfasts, and finished her own, is reading an account of the murder in the *Journale Dramatique* to her spouse, while he discusses his bacon and eggs. It is written in French, but we will take the liberty of translating it. It is headed—

HORRIBLE MURDER AT THE THEATRE FRANCAISE.

ARREST OF A YOUNG ENGLISH ACTOR.

A most heart-rending catastrophe occurred at the above theâtre last night, on the close of the third act of *Les Deux Amants.* The play (which was represented for the first time last night) proceeded without the slightest hitch or interruption till near the close of the last act. The

acting of the principal artistes, especially that of a young English-French actor, by name Messeter, being greatly and deservedly applauded. It was the first appearance of this young man in an important rôle, and his Alfonse was pronounced by some of the first critics of the day to be the most brilliant dramatic success of the season. However, it is not with his histrionic abilities (undoubted though they be) we have to do now, but with the lowering and awful cloud of fearful accusation that shadows his young life, and dims the brightness of his dawning fame. In the last scene but one, Alfonse (Messeter's rôle), a young French nobleman, is supposed to stab his bride Marian in a fit of jealousy. The rôle of Marian was undertaken by the beautiful and popular actress, Mdlle. de Mailly, who acted throughout with great pathos and tenderness; and in the fatal stabbing scene, her sudden burst of passionate despair, when Alfonse wrenched himself from her embrace, was truly fine. She was kneeling before him, when Alfonse drew his dagger, and plunged it in her heart. Never will those present forget the awful cry that rang through the house as he did so. Many ladies fainted, and many more became hysterical; but the audience, though thrilled and startled by the scream, did not then apprehend any mischief. It was not till the poor girl's life-blood was staining the stage, and Alfonse had cried out, and the drop-scene was descending, that any hint of the truth penetrated the minds of the thousands that crammed the theatre. We understand that a surgeon, by name Marble, happened to be among the audience last night, and came forward directly to give his assistance—but from the first, the case was hopeless—Marie de Mailly was stabbed through the heart.

Madame Fanile here stops reading to wipe her eyes, and ejaculate expressions of sympathy and horror. Mons. Fanile takes another bit of toast, also some butter, and then the reading is resumed—

It is stated, that Mr. Messeter gave signs of the greatest grief and remorse for what had occurred, and it is also stated (in some quarters), that he swore to be revenged on the person, man or woman, who had, he declared, changed his stage-dagger for a real one—at which a curious incident occurred, that is likely to cause some complication in the legal bearing of the case. A girl belonging to Mons. Bastile's company, came forward, knelt before Mr. Messeter, said she had done the deed, and begged him forthwith to take his vowed revenge. Mr. Messeter, who was in a frightfully excited state, raised the weapon he still held in his hand, and had he not been arrested, would have had another death upon his soul, and another white woman-face with glazed eye and pain-distorted lips, to haunt him.

"Inhuman monster!" exclaims Madame Fanile, with shrill indignation.

Her "man" grunts assent—his mouth is just now too full to admit of articulation, being occupied by a large piece of toast, some butter, and the yolk of a duck's egg.

The girl's name
(continues Madame Fanile in a pseudo-mysterious voice),
who so nearly brought down upon herself a summary dismissal from this sublunary sphere, does not transpire—though we have heard it whispered that it is Mdlle. Venini, more generally known in the theatrical world as Mdlle. Juliet.

The paper falls from Madame Fanile's fat fire-reddened hands, and she gives vent to a most curious noise, something between a squeal and a chuckle, which so disconcerts Mons. Fanile, who is just in the act of swallowing, that he begins to choke—and Mdlle. Fanile, who has just entered with curl-papers and unwashed face, adds to the family confusion, by setting up a prolonged and dismal howl. After a while they become calmer, and begin suggesting and surmising with the usual amount of ignorant garrulity common to their class.

"That's why she never came back last night." "She's hiding somewhere, poor creature." "She's drowned herself." "She's been arrested." "She's gone to England."

Mons. Bastile, being a man, is the first to quit the airy realms of fancy, and return to the sober earth-level of fact. He picks up the paper lying in a horrified heap at his partner's feet, and begins reading where she had left off—in a loud, aggressive voice, hoarse still from the recent violent spasm of his larynx.

And that she and Dr. Marble have not been forthcoming since they left the theatre last night.

Madame Fanile here declares a light is bursting upon her. Lisette wipes her eyes with her apron, and blinks mazedly.

It seems, as soon as she knew she was dying, Mdlle. de Mailly requested to be left alone with Mr. Messeter, Dr. Marble, and Mdlle. Juliet. The request was of course instantly granted, and the four were together for about a quarter of an hour. After the lapse of that time, Dr. Marble appeared with Mdlle. Juliet in his arms, who had fainted—and who, he said, he would see to her lodgings, adding that Mdlle. de Mailly was dead, and that Mr. Messeter was still with her, and refused to leave her. A cab was called, and the doctor and Mdlle. Juliet drove off—the latter apparently in a dead swoon, (it was observed that she had on her stage-dress, with a black shawl thrown round her. They drove off, and have not been heard of

since. It is said the detectives are already on the track. Mr. Messeter was found kneeling by the side of the body, with the dagger in one hand, and his face hidden in the other. Mons. Bastile was the first to enter the death-chamber, and tapping Mr. Messeter on the shoulder, told him he had better go, as the police were already in the theatre—but he answered that he was waiting for them—that he intended giving himself up to justice. By this time there was a great tumult outside and inside the theatre, and it was as much as the police could do to prevent young Messeter from being roughly handled. He is at present in the lock-up, awaiting his trial at one o'clock to-day."

Mons. Fanile lays down the paper with a grunt, and Madame Fanile expresses her hope that the detectives will not be able to find Mdlle. Juliet and Dr. Marble.

"Poor young thing, she has been left so lonely. No doubt Dr. Marble would marry her, and take her to America, or Australia; where there would be no fear of gendarmes."

"But perhaps she is the guilty party," remarks Mons. Fanile sententiously.

"Not she, *pauvre petite*, and even if she were, she's sorry enough by now," says

Madame Fanile, leniently; for the orphan girl has somehow stolen into her foolish old heart.

"Sorry," says Mons. Fanile, grimly; "she'll be sorrier by-and-by, when she is had up for murder, and sentenced to ten years penal servitude."

Whereupon his gentle wife calls him a heartless brute, an unnatural monster—and then turns to Lisette, who is still snuffling and moaning, and asks her sharply what she means by making such a noise.

Lisette gulps out something about a dagger, and Mdlle. Juliet's supper, and a noise—and —but her incoherences are cut short by her *Mercè* jumping up, and soundly boxing her ears, and daring her, on pain of being flayed alive, to utter a single word about Mdlle. Juliet to her, or anyone.

During this little difference between mother and daughter, Mons. Fanile beats a hasty, but well-organised retreat, not forgetting to

take an umbrella, and a packet of biscuits along with him.

By two o'clock in the afternoon the trial is over, and the newspaper reporters and representatives of the French press generally, are rushing off to their various abodes, to snatch a mouthful of dinner, and prepare their versions of the trial for the evening papers and journals. The bills and placards of the morning are giving place to yet stranger and more startling notices of the last night's tragedy.

"Extraordinary devotion!" "Escape of the murderer!" "Woman in man's clothes!" "A second Constance!" "A romance worthy the age of chivalry!" "Police outwitted by a woman!" etc.

At about seven o'clock in the evening, Mons. Bastile returns to the bosom of his family. At least, Madame Fanile being in the out-kitchen, and hearing something roll down the the steps, and bump violently against the

back door, opens it wonderingly, and discovers her "man" standing on his head—or thereabouts. She helps him to regain his normal position, and then he splutters out—

"I've been to the trial, and I was in such a hurry to tell you about it, that I fell down those d——d steps."

"O, Henri—the trial must have been over a good hour and a half ago," expostulates Madame Fanile; "what made you in such a hurry all of a sudden?"

"I've been talking it over with some friends," he answers, looking rather nonplussed; "and—but come into the kitchen and give me some supper, and I'll tell you all about it."

"Well?" says Madame Fanile, enquiringly.

"Well!" repeats Mons. Fanile, grimly; "I'm not going to stand out here and tell it you, give me some beer, I won't speak a word till I've had a drink."

Madame Fanile complies with his request.

He drinks a glass of ale very deliberately, then sets down the empty tumbler with a bang, and announces shortly—

"There was'nt any trial at all."

Madame Fanile utters a disappointed "O—O—h!"

"Who were they going to try to-day? Who was the trial about?" asks Mons. Fanile, who feeling it will be difficult for the female intellect to grasp the gigantic truth he wishes to impart—thinks he cannot do better than adopt the "children's instructors" method of asking questions.

"Mons. Messeter, to be sure," replies amazed Madame Fanile.

"Well, Mr. Messeter was not forthcoming—he has gone away—quite away!" repeats Fanile, emphatically.

Madame gasps. "How (comment)?"

"Why, the man they took up was a woman," at which lucid paradox Madame Fanile's eyes open as wide as it is possible for ocular organs

to distend—and fix themselves in blank incomprehensiveness on Mons. Fanile's face.

"Come now—guess who the woman was?" says he, encouragingly.

"The woman?"

"Yes—don't you understand, the prisoner at the bar was a woman—instead of a man—instead of Mons. Messeter. Women never can understand anything," adds Mons. Fanile, more pathetically than impatiently.

Madame Fanile does not repudiate the ungallant assertion. "The woman!" she repeats helplessly, "Who was she?" Madame Fanile shakes her head.

"She was" (very slowly and impressively) "Mdlle. *Juliet!*"

Mons. Fanile has been looking forward to this grand climax all the evening. It is one of the minor weaknesses of us poor mortals to derive pleasure from being able to astonish our fellows. A man who relates a surprising event, feels immeasurably superior to his

wide opened-mouthed, and raised-eyebrowed listeners.

Mons. Fanile's anticipated triumph is of short duration. He sees his wife's jaw fall—her ruddy hue pale, and then he springs to his feet with an exclamation of pain and wrath, as she empties the hot contents of a saucepan she holds in her hand—into his lap.

The mishap saves madame from the fit which seems imminent, restores to action her petrified faculties, and shuts her mouth. She carefully dries her husband's knees, removes the contents of the saucepan from the floor, refills it with some fresh meat, and then gets a chair, sits down by the side of her discomposed husband, and says, earnestly—

"Tell me all about it. Where is Mdlle. Juliet now?"

He looks at her, comprehends his defeat, and answers shortly (for his legs are smarting a good deal)—

"In prison."

"Why, you said there was no trial."

"There was no regular trial, but if she is not actually guilty of murder, she is very much implicated in the business, and she is to be retained till the murderer, viz., Messeter, turns up."

"Whose clothes did she dress up in?"

Madame is clear-headed enough now.

"In Messeter's, to be sure—his stage dress. It is he, not Juliet, who has gone off with Dr. Marble. I suppose the doctor will marry him, and take him to Australia—eh, madame?"

But madame takes no notice of the jocose query; she is much too much in earnest.

"Mons. Messeter's; and he wore her's, and got the doctor to carry him out of the theatre as Mdlle. Juliet?"

"Yes."

"Poltroon! coward! I do not want any proof of his guilt; to me it is a fact. And

la pauvre Juliet; why did she consent to a plan so base?"

"That's the very question the judge put to her in court. By-the-bye, Marie de Mailly was married, and has left a child. She and her husband quarrelled, and he left her three or four years ago, poor thing, to fish for herself."

"Ah, one never knows the ins and outs of these actress's lives; but what did Juliet say when the judge asked her why she aided Mons. Messeter to escape?"

"She did not answer at first; he had to repeat the question, and then she looked up white as death—poor girl, she was *so* white—and said in a low voice that was yet heard all over the court, 'Because he is my friend.' A laugh went round, and the judge smiled, and said, 'Your lover, I suppose you mean, my girl?' 'No, my lord,' she answered, cool as you please, 'I mean what I say.' Again the court laughed, but this time it was at the

expense of the judge. Again he questioned her, 'Not your lover? Is it for friendship's sake, then, that you are here to-day?' 'Partly, and partly because (as I have already told you) I changed the dagger, and am therefore guilty of Marie de Mailly's death.' 'Allow me to remark, mademoiselle,' said the judge, gravely, 'you have done your friend's cause great harm by your interference. If Mons. Messeter had been arrested last night, and you had appeared to-day as a witness to his innocence, the case would have had a very different aspect; as it is—'"

"Well, what more did he say?" asks Madame Fanile, eagerly. "As it is—; how did he go on?"

"I don't quite remember what he said then," murmurs Mons. Fanile, who is becoming somewhat drowsy from the combined effects of warmth and beer, "but I know the upshot of it was that as Mdlle. Juliet had already *acted* a lie for Mons. Messeter's sake

the court could not possibly avoid coming to the conclusion that she would not hesitate to *tell* a lie for the same cause."

"Then they did not believe she had done it. I'm so glad; I'm so glad," cries Madame Fanile, delightedly.

"No; you see no one came forward to give evidence against her, and as her version of the affair was considered quite unreliable—"

"She was acquitted?" interrupts Madame Fanile, inquiringly.

"Well, no; not exactly. You see no one had accused her, and without an accusation there can be no acquittal. She is to be retained, however, till Messeter is found, and she was fined for wearing male disguise."

"Was that all? Did they ask her no more questions?"

"No—ah, yes—one. Just as she was stepping down the judge called to her to wait a minute, he had one more question to put to her. Then, as she waited, 'Mons. Messeter

is not your lover,' he remarked, quietly, 'but do you love him?' You should have seen the poor girl, *ma chere.* She did not answer. I don't think she could, but stood quite still, her cheeks, her forehead, her neck, alike dyed with a great crimson flush of shame. The judge waited a little while before he renewed the question, then remarked, 'You have answered my question very plainly in colours;' (she had turned paler than ever after the blush) 'the nautical fashion of communication is very good in its way; but I want a vocal response, if you please. Do you love Mons. Messeter?' The girl still hesitated. I fancy she was trying to think what answer it would be best to give for Messeter's sake. At last she looked up, looked straight at the judge, and said, 'No.'"

"What then—what did the judge say? Was he angry?"

"Oh, no; he only laughed and told her not to come to him when she wanted a character for truthfulness."

Madame Fanile does not ask any more questions. She remains staring into the fire and thinking it over, and forgetting to eat her supper. Mons. Fanile dozes off with his head against a wooden settle. An hour passes so, when suddenly Mons. F. tumbles off his chair, and continues his slumbers on the floor; at which Madame Fanile rouses herself, and asks another question.

"What did Mdlle. Juliet say she planned Mdlle. de Mailly's death for?"

Mons. Fanile does not reply, so his wife shakes him, and repeats the question in a voice loud enough to wake the dead.

"Spite!" he mutters, sleepily. "She hated her because she had the principal part in the play, so she said."

CHAPTER V.

A WOEFUL WAKING.

"I may not seize on the shape of my fear."
Payne's Night Watch.

BERTRAM opens his eyes at last. He has been trying to do so for some minutes past, but they stuck shut as if some malicious fairy had been carefully glueing them together in the night. He opens them, but at first he cannot see anything. The winter sunlight is streaming in with such gay brilliance at the unshuttered window, that it completely dazzles his sleepy vision. "I must have slept late," he mutters, stretching out his hand for his watch, which he always places by his side at night. There is no watch there. His hand comes in contact with something hard

—a chest of drawers. He raises himself slightly, and his eyes, no longer dazzled, gaze round the room in dull, unblinking surprise. "Where am I?" he ejaculates, helplessly, addressing the question apparently to a small green washhand-stand opposite. Years and years hence, when Messeter will have been worried or ill in the daytime, he will be certain to see this horrid green washhand-stand, and feel the same painful bewilderment that now oppresses him. "This is not my room," he says, after taking a prolonged survey of the apartment. Not that there was anything incomprehensible or strange either in its furniture or shape. It is very circumscribed, to begin with. The walls are white-washed. A wooden table, painted green; a chest of drawers by the iron bedstead, likewise painted green; two straw-bottomed chairs, and the afore-mentioned green washhand-stand, with a small mirror hanging over it, complete its inventory. Certainly, it is not

like his room at the Hotel de la Joie; but—"I have it," he exclaims, and at the same time he springs out of the bed. "I have mistaken my room. I have often thought I should do so, and I have been occupying some one else's bed. Well, it's not half so comfortable a one as mine. I wonder if its usual tenant is sleeping in mine," and he actually laughs at the idea. Then he sits down on the end of the bed, and tries to think what he was doing last night that made him so absent. Was he screwed? Did he dine out anywhere? He *cannot* remember. The whole evening is a hideous blank, and as he sits there in the full blaze of the morning sun, an undefined dread creeps over him, a vague feeling that something horrible is going to happen, or has happened. O, what is the meaning of this dead load of apprehension that oppresses him? Why does he shrink and turn away from the gentle sunlight? Why does he feel such an insane

desire to hide himself somewhere, anywhere, quite away in the dark? He covers his face with his hands, and groans with fear. At the same moment the door opens quietly, and Dr. Marble enters. Bertram does not raise his head.

"Well, Messeter," he says, cheerily, advancing, and laying his hand on the young man's shoulder, "I was beginning to think you were going to sleep on for ever. I have been in ever so many times to look at you."

The young actor raises his troubled, uncomprehending eyes to his friend's face, but does not express any surprise at seeing him. He is trying to recall the awful calamity that has befallen him, which he begins to *know* has befallen him, and which his whole being is trembling and quailing before, but which he *cannot* name. The doctor misinterprets the dumb, fixed look of the dark eyes, and says, soothingly—

"Come, come, Bertram, you must not take

it so to heart. It was an unpleasant *contre-temps*, but accidents will happen, you know. See, I have brought you one of my best suits for you to robe yourself in. Make haste and dress, and I'll go and order up your breakfast. Holloa! what's the row?" for Bertram has risen, and is gripping him by the shoulder with eyes glaring like a madman's.

"What is it, what have I done?" he almost shrieks. "Tell me—for God's sake, tell me, or I shall go mad."

Dr. Marble understands the case in a moment. A lapse of memory is not at all a thing to be wondered at under the circumstances. He blames himself mentally that he has not foreseen it, and been better prepared to deal with it. As it is, there is nothing to be done but tell him the truth at once, and put a stop to an excitement which is imminently dangerous.

"I suppose," he says, lightly, "I had better begin by informing you that you are at

present at Dover, a charming watering-place, *vide* Guide Book."

"Dover? tell me—tell me—"

"My dear fellow, I'll tell you; there's not very much to tell; only leave go my arm please, you're pinching it cruelly, and sit down." And as Messeter complies, still staring at him with wild, strained eyes, he continues, carelessly—

"I don't wonder at your having forgotten all about the unlucky circumstance, the thundering dose of morphia I gave you was enough to muddle any man's brain. You don't remember my giving it you, I suppose?" The doctor wants to let the poor puzzled brain remember as gradually as possible.

Bertram shakes his head, but his eyes are growing wilder, wilder.

"Then I suppose you don't remember acting last night in *Les Deux Amants?*"

"Last night? not last night. I remember acting it once long ago, but not *last* night."

The young actor speaks hurriedly, pressing his hands upon his brow, and panting distressfully.

"But you *did* act it last night. Do you not remember there was some—some mistake" (Dr. Marble's voice, self-controlled as he is, trembles a little) "about your dagger?"

Another shake of the head.

Has the record of last night's withering anguish faded for ever from his mind? Has the very keenness of the agony worked its own cure? Has he been graciously permitted to drink of the waters of Lethe? Has that cup—that costly cup, which thousands of earth's tormented ones crave and pray for in vain—been presented to his fevered lips while he slept by the pitying hands of angels? Shall he remember it no more for ever? Hush! methinks his angel stands before the Great White Throne, with veiled face, pleading, pleading: "He is so young, dear Lord; his heart is innocent, aye, innocent as the

three days' babe I fetched from earth this morning. He has borne himself right manfully. Let him, I beseech Thee, forget this horror that has fallen upon him by no fault of his. O, I beseech Thee, grant me this boon for him, or else I fear me that his heart will break, or what is worse, fall from its first estate of purity; and that his clear eyes, no longer able to read justice or compassion in the heavens, will cleave dulled and desperate to the earth for evermore. O, spare him. Let me haste to him with the precious draught that Thou grantedst to the poor widow yesterday, whose life is so nearly over, and his is but just begun." And a Voice, like the far-off murmur of a summer sea, makes answer: "Not by forgetfulness shall he o'ercome. My Grace is sufficient—." Not by forgetfulness.

The doctor is a good deal taken aback by the second shake of Bertram's head. He has to pause for a moment for self-control, which is hard to win while that quivering form and

white distorted face confront him. After a while he tries another passage to his friend's recollection.

"Marie de Mailly—"

There, there, he need say no more; memory has come back to her stronghold—not gently nor gradually, as the doctor had hoped—but suddenly, fiercely, with the ruthless spring of a tiger leaping on its prey.

"She is *dead.* Marie is dead, and I have killed her. It has come back to me—all come back to me. I am a murderer, a *murderer!*"

It is said we suffer in proportion to the fineness of our organisations and the sensitiveness of our nervous system. Often, nay usually, a highly-strung constitution is likewise a frail one, which in some degree compensates for the superior capacity of suffering inherent in such by the palliatives secured to it from the exhaustion of physical strength, viz., fainting, hysterics, coma, even sleep.

Women, most women, at least, suffer more and more keenly than men, and hence the merciful alleviations provided for them in quick tears, quick unconsciousness. How about a man endowed with the *artiste*-temperament (more delicate than a woman's), and also with the strong frame and robust physical strength of young manhood?

Poor Bertram. He claims a little of our pity, I think, as he lies writhing at his friend's feet.

"I'm a murderer, a murderer!"

"You are nothing of the sort," says Dr. Marble, coolly; but his fair Saxon face is nearly as white as Bertram's as he bends over him to raise him from the ground.

"Don't touch me, don't look at me," cries Bertram, cowering away from him. "I'm a murderer, I tell you. I saw her lying dead, with blood upon her breast. I killed her, I tell you; with my own hand I made that hideous wound. I saw the blood, her blood, upon the dagger—"

"Messeter!" says the young surgeon, with feigned sternness, "I'm surprised at you. I could never have believed you could have given vent to such silly raving, only worthy of an hysterical woman or a nervous child. Why, man, you're no more a murderer than I am; perhaps of the two, I have a better right to the title, for I performed an operation the other day which I knew would probably be fatal, and it was; but, lor' bless you" (with an admirable assumption of careless indifference) "little accidents of that sort will occur in our profession. It's a good job I can take things of that sort more philosophically than you do."

I must here state, in justice to Dr. Marble, that the case he mentioned was solely and entirely an effort of his imagination to support his argument.

"Bertram," he continues, kneeling down beside the prostrate figure, and laying his hand gently on the bowed head that is pressed

with such piteous self-abasement against the rough floor, "seriously speaking, you must try and bear up bravely against this unlucky circumstance. You have a grand future before you" (a shudder passes through the strong young frame upon which his hand rests), "and you must not let yourself be unnerved by this accident—a confoundedly unpleasant one, I grant you, just at the outset of your career."

"I will never act again," mutters the low-lying figure, hoarsely.

Dr. Marble takes no notice of the remark. He sees he has succeeded in diverting the young fellow's thoughts, and he pushes his advantage further.

"I was really quite surprised last night by the power and passion of your acting. Highly as I have always thought of your histrionic talents, it positively took away my breath—it was so like real—"

The doctor could have bitten his tongue

out with vexation as soon as he had uttered the word.

"Real, aye, as real as death," cries Bertram, bitterly. Then as he looks up and meets the distressed, compassionate eyes of his friend, his face quivers and changes.

"Arthur!" he wails out, "Oh, Arthur, Arthur!"

"Poor fellow; poor old man!"

Dr. Marble's blue eyes are full of tears, and as he raises the young man in his arms, they fall, drop by drop, on the hot, anguished eyes that cannot weep for themselves.

CHAPTER VI.

DR. MARBLE DRAWS ON HIS IMAGINATION.

"Terrors are turned upon me; my welfare passes away as a cloud" (Job xxix. 15).

"But if there were no fear of my being apprehended, why did you bring me away from Paris in such a hurry?" asks Bertram, a couple of hours later.

He has mastered the first wildness of his despair, and for a time has hidden away his sorrow that he may learn all the ins and outs of the woeful catastrophe. His natural manliness has reasserted itself, and he turns and stands at bay before the hideous fate that has overtaken him. From the question he has just propounded, it will be easy to infer that the doctor has again been drawing on his imagination for the sake of Bertram's peace

of mind. He is getting rather hot with the exertion (unwonted, be it said) of telling a string of plausible falsehoods—no easy task, when one has not invented them beforehand. Spontaneous lying generally lacks consistency as regards statements, and coherency in relation to details. To add to the doctor's discomfiture, Bertram persists in talking in a loud voice, which he feels certain can be heard in the adjoining room and half way down the passage.

"I say, old fellow, you need'nt let the whole establishment know all our family affairs," he says, in a low voice, drawing his chair close to the other's. "I took you with me last night because it was convenient—because I—in short, because I was coming myself, and I could'nt leave you behind in the state you were" (that's quite true, says the doctor, persuasively, to his conscience); "besides, as I knew change of air and scene are absolutely necessary for you just now"

("true again," remarks Dr. Marble, triumphantly, to his inward monitor.

"You were coming, were you," says Bertram, with perfect credulity in the assertion.

Mem: If you want to be believed, tell a good round "buster," it "goes down" like a bepeppered oyster.

"Yes," says the doctor, boldly; then in answer to the inward prick, he retorts in ungramatical prevarication, ("I were coming, only I didn't know it.")

"You never told me of the intention—have you friends here then?"

"No—no; I'm off home to Yorkshire for a month's holiday, but I had to put up here on your account—you will be all right this evening, and fit to proceed with me, I hope, to the "bonny moors." I say, how warm it it is. I think I shall go for a stroll for half-an-hour—I'll have a feed then, and our train starts an hour and a half from this."

"No, don't go just yet! I want to ask you some more questions." (Dr. Marble groans inwardly). "And I've got no clothes."

"O! I can supply you; I've brought an extra stock on purpose."

"But it's not particularly pleasant wearing other men's clothes. I think I'll send for mine—or run over and fetch them, and join——."

"Stuff, nonsense!" says the doctor, sharply—his horror at the proposal making him speak roughly. "Why, we shall both be returning to Paris in a few days."

"I thought you said you intended taking a month's holiday?"

"I—I—yes—but I must run back for a few days, before the month is out; I left so hastily. I—that—there is to be a consultation about a patient of mine next week, that I should like to be at," says the doctor, with a reckless disregard to verity. "And now, by jove, old fellow, I must be off; or I shall not

be back by feeding time," he adds; beating a hasty retreat to the door."

"No, no—stay a minute; I particularly—"

But the doctor has made his escape, carefully shutting the door behind him, and Bertram who has half risen from his chair, as if to arrest his friend, sinks back into it as the door closes, and sits perfectly still, gazing into the dying fire—gazing wearily, solemnly, steadily, as if forcing himself to think over and consider carefully, some circumstance, the details of which his spirit quails, and his heart bleeds to remember. He can see it—ah! so plainly—that pain-drawn white face, growing sharp and unfamiliar, as the wings of the black-robed angel overshadow it. No, he must not shrink from the vision—he wants to remember all about it—the words it spake—the words it looked. He wants to recollect every syllable of adjuration that the pale lips uttered, every wish or expression that was mirrored in the dim eyes, that looked so

kindly and pityingly on him to the last. "To forgive her—I'm glad I did not promise to, or I should never have rested till I had done so—for thy sake, Marie," (he soliloquises under his breath). "As it is (clenching his strong white teeth) if I ever forgive her, may heaven forgive her also." A long pause, during which, Bertram with knit brow, gazes strainingly into the fire, his eyes growing almost as wild and strained as in his first bewilderment. He is trying to recollect something that she spoke of just at the last. "What was it? *What was it?*" She looked up into his eyes, and said——. He throws himself back in his chair, and presses his hands passionately over his eyes. "O Marie, what did you say? What did you charge me to do? It was something—something—." He rises to his feet with his eyes shut, stretching out his arms imploringly — "Tell me again, darling, communicate your last speech to me again, the request or message that my heart

and brain, dull and stupefied by reason of my great pain, have forgone—forgotten." He waits with lifted face and quivering eyelids, but no touch, or sign, or hint from another world is vouchsafed to him in his great need. "Marie," he continues, pleading softly, "Wherever thou art, and thou canst not be far off surely, for thou wast by my side this time last night, I adjure thee, make known to me thy last message, or charge, it shall be delivered faithfully, or guarded by my life. Marie, to show thy forgiveness of the piteous blunder, thy pity for the blunderer, whose pain thou canst lessen only by reminding him of thy parting words, thou wert always kind—compassionate—thou wilt tell me—behold I wait."

* * * * *

Tiny footsteps pattering down the passage, childish voices softly interprattling—then one alone, and then a faltering footstep pausing at the door, then the handle rattled—

fastened and unfastened by hasty, unaccustomed little hands, and then a round face, framed in golden hair looks in, and a sweet small voice asks anxiously:

"Ma Maman, où est Ma Maman?"

Bertram starts, his raised hands drop to his side. The innocent childish enquiry wakes, as if by magic, the echo of the words he has been so vainly trying to recall.

"*My child, my little Marietta—I leave her to your care, my pretty babe—my wee blossom.* You will guard her," and in his strangely overwrought and over-excited mood, he believes the words—the child herself sent from heaven, Marie's child sent by Marie to remind him of his promise.

The child stares round the unfamiliar room and at the strange man, and repeats the question with a frightened sob, while great crystal drops begin to steal down its fair plump cheeks.

"Maman où est Maman?"

'En ciel," replies Bertram, gravely; advancing with luminous eyes and outstretched arms to the little creature.

Instantly on his approach the child screams, and darting from the doorway, falls right into the landlady's arms, who had come to search for her little truant daughter.

"Very sorry that Emmie has disturbed you, sir," she says with a curtsey, as she catches sight of Bertram standing by the table.

Bertram stares blankly at her, then closes the door in silence, and returns to his chair by the fire.

"How stupid of me," he mutters. "Mrs. Blake's child, not Marie's, nevertheless I doubt not it was sent by her to remind me. Marie, I thank thee," (with a reverent upward look), "I will not be slow to fulfil my promise. Poor little motherless Marietta, you shall not want a friend or protector while I live. I wonder if her father is alive. What time has been lost already," (springing up

with an impatient start, and beginning restlessly to pace the room). "As soon as ever Marble returns I shall start for Paris." He rings the bell to enquire what time the boat starts for Calais.

A maid-servant enters almost at the same moment, bearing a note for him on a salver. He tears it open hastily. It is from Dr. Marble.

"Dear old fellow," it runs; "don't wait dinner. Have fallen in with an old chum, pressed to dine; will be back in time for the train; be all ready.—Yours, A. Marble."

"Did you ring, sir?" asks the maid; as Bertram looks up from the perusal of the note.

"Yes. Can you tell me what time the next boat starts for Calais?"

She does not exactly know, but she thinks the next is at six o'clock and will find out for certain.

Bertram takes out his watch, it is now a quarter past three.

"Bring up dinner for one in half an hour," he says, "and let me know about the boat immediately."

Exit the maid, who returns shortly with a time-table, also a newspaper.

"Mrs. Blake had sent her time-table to the gentleman, and would he like to look out the steamer for himself, and thought perhaps he would like to see the evening paper, as there was such an awful account in it of a murder, which took place in Paris last evening."

Mechanically Bertram takes the paper and time-table from the maid's hand, and long after she had gone, he stands still holding them in his outstretched hand, as if he had been petrified in the act of receiving them, presently he begins to tremble—to tremble piteously from head to foot; he drops the time-table, and sinks into a chair near him, still clutching the fatal paper in his shaking hands.

"In the paper," he repeats, helplessly;

"all in the papers." It is a long time before he can regain sufficient calmness to open and peruse it. The short hand of the little gold clock on the mantelpiece points to three, he rises and locks the door, and finds the paragraph headed—

"SHOCKING MURDER AT ONE OF THE PARIS THEATRES."

The account consists chiefly of extracts from the last evening's gazette (with which description our reader is already acquainted), freely interspersed with the usual comments and suggestions, that "our own correspondent's" soul delights in. He reads it attentively, steadily; after the first expression of utter surprise, no sound of either dismay or perturbation escapes him. He finishes the perusal of it carefully, and looks up and sighs a sigh of positive relief. "I am glad I know how matters stand," (he thinks). "My proper course is clear enough now, I shall give myself up at once to the authorities; poor old

Marble, it was not well done of him to hide the truth so completely from me, though it was done only from sheer kindness at heart, I know, and as he thought for my good; but I could ill have brooked the double stain of murderer and coward on my name." (It will be perceived that Bertram fully appreciates the wide distinction between reviling oneself and being reviled by others). "To-morrow, please God, I shall be cleared from both these imputations, at any rate from the latter; the whole of the wretched affair shall be thoroughly sifted to the bottom, and, if my innocence is not established, I shall not have much opinion of French law courts. I should not feel sorry if Juliet—but I will not implicate her more than I can help, though I do not doubt her guilt for a moment."

At this stage of his cogitations he remembers the time table, and taking it up from the floor he looks out for the next steamer, and finds that one starts at five p.m. for Calais,

he then writes a note for Dr. Marble telling him his purposes, eats his dinner, and sets off soon after for the pier, at the end of which the steamer is snorting and puffing which is to bear him across the narrow strip of water that divides England from France, that is to bear him to his destruction, or his vindication.

"Please, sir; the gentleman 'ave gone, and 'ave left a note for you in the parlour," are the words which greet Dr. Marble on his return to his and Bertram's lodgings at 6 p.m.

"Gone!" ejaculates the doctor; then pushing hastily past her, he enters the parlour, and snatches up the note addressed to him that is lying on the table. He swears a good deal, I must own, when he has mastered the contents of the billét, in which Bertram has stated in as few words as possible, the course he intends to pursue. Poor Dr. Marble, you must excuse his bad language as he stamps frantically about the room. If there is

one thing more provoking than another in this most exasperating and contrary planet, it is after having outraged a tender conscience, lowered your self-esteem, and stained your moral character with a thousand falsehoods, in the cause of friendship, to discover that your perfidy has not only utterly failed to bring about the desired consummation of affairs, but has also re-acted on you to your detriment, by turning the very friend against you on whose altar you have so freely sacrificed your dearest scruples. After the doctor has torn the obnoxious gazette which he finds lying on the ground into a thousand bits, and flung Mrs. Clarke's time-table across the room, he feels somewhat better, and pulls the bell.

The maid appearing with a "Yes, sir?" He tells her to bring him something to eat. (By-the-bye, that meeting with a friend was also a little ruse of the doctor's; at any rate, if Lawyer Wilkins was his friend, he was one

he had not met before to-day; and though they were closeted together nearly two hours, they discussed but one topic, and no offer of refreshment was made on Mr. Wilkins' part.)

But to return. As soon as the maid brings the doctor's repast, he puts the same question to her that Bertram did only two hours since.

"Can you tell me when the next boat starts for Calais?"

"No, sir; but you will be able to find out in the time-table." She looks, as she speaks, for the missing book.

"I saw it here a minute ago," says Dr. Marble rather consciously, as he rises to look for it, in the direction he remembers flinging it. He and the maid have rather a tedious search for it, but discover it eventually, with its cover off, in a remote corner of the room, under an ottoman.

"The next steamer does not start till 9 P.M.," Dr. Marble groans aloud. It will be impossible to serve him—all he can do now

will be to appear as a witness to his innocence, and, by jove, he'll make Wilkins come with him—he seems a knowing kind of fellow, and can talk French like a native. He'll be off and tell him directly, and then come back and get his things, and settle with the landlady.

He has not much time, and to the amazement of the maid and also of Mrs. Clarke, who is looking over the banisters, the young doctor seizes his hat and absolutely bolts out of the door, and down the street.

"For all the world as if the devil and h'all 'is h'angels were after 'im," as the maid subsequently observes to the cook, to whom she gives a full and detailed account of "them two 'strad'nery gents."

CHAPTER VII.

"But the pity of it, Iago—Iago, the pity of it, Iago."

THE trial is over—it is all over. From the first, the strong tide of public opinion and sympathy has been dead against Bertram Messeter; and there has also been a curious fatality (sometimes observable in cases of the kind) in the way every circumstance connected with Mdlle. de Mailly's death has seemed to twist itself round for his condemnation. His very cry in the supreme agony of his surprise when first he lifted Marie from the stage was cited against him as his actor's power of dissimulation. His vow to revenge her death, and the melo-dramatic scene which followed, was also brought forward as another argument against the reality of his remorse.

Unlike Juliet, *his* accusers have been many and powerful—Mons. Bastile has been at the head of them, vexed at the slur cast upon his company; grieved at the loss of Marie de Mailly, and angry with what he termed, Messeter's cowardly flight—and at the same time really believing him to be guilty: he has assumed the attitude of plaintiff in the case. Bertram has stood at the prisoner's bar day after day for the last week, and it has seemed to him as if all the hatred and jealousy and meanness of the whole earth has amassed itself against him; as witness after witness to his guilt has appeared, with their narrow hearts full of spiteful jealousy against the successful young actor, and their false lips and lying tongues uttering statement after statement to his condemnation. There was Carl le Roy (an actor in Mons. Bastile's company), who had professed great friendship for him, and with whom he had often supped and played, aye, and with whom he had had

many a boyish freak, and now Bertram has seen him stand up in the witness-box and denounce him as a murderer. He has listened in sheer amazement to the ingenious fabrications of his accusers, and the far-fetched proofs of his guilt that have been brought forwards by them; and when Jean Verosse, another actor in M. Bastile's company, asserted that he had seen him change the dagger with his own eyes, and had not thought anything of the action till the subsequent event, but that how he had felt it his duty to mention it. Bertram, who had really loved the man, covered his face with his hands, and moaned and shook, and wept in the helpless indignant anguish of betrayed affection.

The witnesses for the prisoner's innocence were only two in number—Juliet and Dr. Marble. Juliet's evidence was worthless, and Dr. Marble's very nearly so. The young surgeon being put upon his oath, he could not (being honest as this world goes) draw on

his prolific fancy for statements in his friends' favour. The most he could do was to prove clearly that Bertram did not leave Paris on the night of the accident of his own accord, but that he (Dr. Marble) drugged him, and conveyed him to Dover out of harm's way, "because," the young doctor had added, with a contemptuous flash of his English blue eye in the direction of the judge and jury, "because the issue of a case of the kind, however accurately to be counted on in England, in French courts would be wonderfully and fearfully uncertain."

Of course there were the usual cries of "Order!" "Order!" at this speech, and Mr. Wilkins, the counsel for the defendant, looked deprecatingly across at the hot-blooded young Englishman, as if to implore him not to lessen the meagre chance there was for Bertram by puerile impatience.

As for Juliet, the clever French lawyer for the plaintiff (Mons. Bastile), broke down her

evidence in a few minutes. He began by assuring her it was only as a matter of form that she was questioned at all, as she had completely forfeited her right to give any evidence whatever by having already grossly deceived the Court by personating the prisoner at the bar. However, as she was there, he would put one or two questions to her, which for her own sake as well as the defendant's, he advised her to answer truthfully.

And then Juliet, whom the fearful strain of the last few days had rendered utterly incapable of coherent thought or self-control, burst out into the wildest vows and protestations of Bertram's innocence and her guilt. In vain the counsel told her to be quiet and answer his questions. She went on asseverating and contradicting herself with pitiful incoherency; and, at last, falling on her knees in the witness-box, and stretching out her clasped hands in an agony of entreaty

towards the judge, she cried on him for "mercy!" "mercy!"

"Damn," muttered Wilkins, then rising, "the girl is hysterical, my lord," he said. "I protest against her being questioned while in that state."

"Control yourself, my good girl," said the judge, in a conciliatory voice, "and tell me for whom you are imploring mercy?"

And Juliet, hearing the voice, and in her frenzy of apprehension, mistaking the blandness of its tone for pity, completely lost her head. Still kneeling, she sobbed out that she only craved mercy for Bertram, who was innocent; for herself—nothing. She had planned the death of Mdlle. de Mailly, because she was jealous of Bertram's love for her—for—for—she loved him so, and——

"And so," the judge had interposed still blandly; "and so she was 'out of court.'"

Then came the triumph of Bertram's enemies. The dagger was produced—the

very identical dagger (Bertram said so, directly it was presented to him), with the dull red stain still upon it, and—Bertram's initials.

Yes; there they were—"B. M." Bertram rubbed his eyes when they were pointed out to him, then passed his fingers over the letters as one in a dream. From that hour to this he has not been able to imagine who could have had the brutal malice to have had them engraved. Yet there they were, and, for a moment, the discovery struck him dumb with dismay. Only for a moment, however; and then his tall figure seemed to grow taller, as it loomed with the awful dignity of betrayed innocence upon his base accusers. His lip curled with bitter defiance, and his voice trembled in the intensity of his scorn, as he spoke,—

"Gentlemen, that dagger is not mine; the letters upon it are the initial letters of my Christian and surname—whether this circumstance is a strange coincidence or the work of

some base churl, I do not care to guess. I only wish to assert that I never had a dagger in my possession, nor have I had my initials engraved on one; this I assert and maintain, so help me God."

The denial was received with an ominous silence. Then Mr. Wilkins rose to his feet and begged that Mdlle. Juliet might be asked where she obtained the dagger.

After some minutes the request was acceded to, and once more poor Juliet was placed in the witness-box.

Where had she obtained the dagger which, according to her version of the story, she had placed in Mons. Messeter's sheath.

She had got it from an armourer some days ago (which was true enough).

"But how about the initials?"

And then Juliet resolved to make one last, desperate effort in Bertram's cause.

"The initials? Oh, yes; she had cut those herself in an idle moment; and, much

to her annoyance, had been unable to erase them afterwards.

"With what had she cut or scratched them?" asked the wily lawyer.

And Juliet fell at once into the trap.

"With the sharp point of her scissors." And then she paused; for she saw, by the broad smile on every face that she had blundered.

"Mademoiselle was very clever, no doubt," the lawyer observed, with a sarcastic smile, as he handed the dagger to Juliet, "but he was afraid even *she* could not have engraved those letters without something more handy for the purpose than a pair of scissors."

"No, no; she remembered now. It was with a sharp knife—a very sharp penknife—that Madame Fanile (her landlady) had given her, for some work she was doing."

Even the judge smiled at the girl's *naïve* falsehood; and, as for the Court, it simply roared. The letters were beautifully cut, and

finished off with curls and flourishes in the most approved style of initial engraving; and Juliet's quiet assertion that she had scratched them with a penknife was too rich. Peal after peal of laughter resounded through the court, during which Juliet stood dumb and trembling, like a hare, that having made a false double in its bewilderment, finds itself confronted by a pack of yelping hounds.

But it is all over now;—no one can make or mar in the matter now. Juliet's damaging evidence and Bertram's adversaries have done their worst. The jury have retired to decide their verdict. The court is crammed; for the case has excited immense interest among the tragic-loving denizens of Paris. A crowd, swelling in numbers every minute, has been waiting outside for the last two hours—waiting to know the end.

"They cannot bring it in murder, at any rate," remarks Mr. Wilkins to Dr. Marble, by way of encouragement, as they stand side by

side for a few moments, amongst the suffocating throng.

Dr. Marble does not answer. Every vestige of colour has left his face, which is so set and fixed that Bertram, who has been looking round the court for his friend, has failed to recognise in that white, rigid face, the ruddy, genial countenance of the young surgeon. For the last hour Dr. Marble has not dared to glance at Bertram. He saw him when he was first brought in, and the sight of the young face, worn and changed with the helpless, sickening misery of the last few days, so nearly upset his self-control, he has not dared to turn his eyes in that direction since.

Juliet is there, or Juliet's ghost, is it? that gazes from the gallery with such a wan and woeful look. Sleepless nights and fasting days have told terribly upon her. Her full, rounded figure has wasted and dwindled as from the ravages of a fell disease; her deep,

grey eyes, sunken and dim with weeping, have inky shadows under them and round them. Her white lips, slightly apart, are quivering with her heavy, painful breathing. She is looking at Bertram; she has never looked away once from the brave young face so calm in its intense despair—the despair that she has brought there, but she does not think of that now. The feelings of keen remorse and vehement self-reproach that have tortured her incessantly for the last three days are passive now—silent, utterly swallowed up in the overwhelming fear that in a little while she will see his face no more. There is no relation of Bertram's in the court. His uncle, to whom Dr. Marble has written and apprised of his nephew's dilemma, has not been able to come to Paris, but sent word that he would go bail to any amount for the young man, and expressed his earnest hope that the serious charge brought against him would be able to be most fully and satisfactorily refuted.

A door opens; the jurymen come pouring gravely into the court; and amid a breathless silence the judge puts the usual questions.

"Guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty of manslaughter."

A curious muttering murmur goes round the court, almost like an expression of disappointment. Nearly all the spectators have been anticipating a different verdict, and have been looking forward to a sentence, a sentence that, according to court etiquette, would oblige the judge before passing it to doff a black cap.

Mr. Wilkins sighs and wipes his forehead, upon which (partly from the heat, but more from anxiety) great drops of perspiration are standing. "Thought they could'nt bring in murder, but was confoundedly afraid they would all the same," he mutters to himself. "Nasty vindictive set of fellows; save me from ever being tried by a French judge and jury, that's all."

But silence, the judge is about to pass sentence. Every eye is turned towards young Messeter now, and as Dr. Marble looks at his friend at last, Bertram meets his eyes and recognises him instantly. (It is a curious fact that if a person is a little distance off it is almost impossible to be certain of his identity unless he looks at you.) A sudden spasm of anguish contracts his face; it is only for a moment, and then his dark, fearless eyes gaze as calmly and affectionately at his friend as if they stood side by side wishing each other a good-night or a gay good-bye to meet again on the morrow. Dr. Marble, on the contrary, trembles from head to foot, then groans and turns away, covering his face with his hands. Juliet does not move. She is still gazing, gazing on the face that is half turned from her, that has always been turned from her. She will not faint, though her face is so ghastly and her breathing so laboured, that the woman sitting near her has involuntarily put her arm round her.

"I hereby sentence you, Bertram Messeter, prisoner at the bar—having been found guilty of manslaughter—to ten years' penal servitude, which, owing to the particular circumstances connected with the deed, and also in consideration of the prisoner's youth, are commuted to seven years' penal servitude."

There is no mother in court to scream and cry on this occasion, no sister to go into hysterics nor faint. Only two incidents of any interest occur. Dr. Marble seizes Verosse, who happens to be standing near, round the throat, and presses on his windpipe with such goodwill, that that worthy's face is very nearly black before the surgeon's hands are forcibly removed by the police; and in the gallery a girl swoons away, and falling like lead from the woman's arms who would have held her, drops, as if dead, at her feet. As for the prisoner, he looks steadily at the judge, his lips curling, curling, then glances round the

court, and smiles. O that smile! What words can describe the supreme contempt, the proud defiance, the fearful scorn expressed in it. Even Mons. Bastile, full of malice and hatred as he is towards the prisoner, cannot refrain from a sigh of regretful admiration as he remarks, with several rather forcible French oaths that, *sans doute*, the young fellow would have made his fortune on the stage.

Dr. Marble determined to speak to his friend once more, come what may, pushes and fights a passage to him as he stands quietly between a couple of *gendarmes*, while a third fastens the orthodox handcuffs on his wrists. Bertram's hands are already manacled when he feels an eager hand upon his arm, and turning, sees the young surgeon's white agitated face at his elbow.

"Unlock these handcuffs for one moment," he says, turning his handsome young face to the *gendarme* on his right side. "Free my

right hand for one little moment, that I may grasp for the last time *le main de mon seul ami.*"

The *gendarme*, a big, burly fellow of some six feet, mutters that it is a proceeding quite irregular, *outrè*, but finally consents to release the prisoner's right hand for the space of two seconds, while his brother official still retains the left in custody.

With a quick movement, too swift for even the watchful eyes of the *gendarmes* to catch, Bertram's right hand touches the sleeve of his left arm before he places it in Dr. Marble's. Firmly, clingingly the two hands clasp each other. Dr. Marble cannot speak; his grief and anger are almost choking him; Bertram is still calm, with the awful calmness of a "*partis pris*," the stony apathy of a dying person.

"Good-bye, God bless you, and don't be too sorry about me — good-bye — good-bye."

Lingeringly, lothfully, the twined hands unclasp. A mist comes before Dr. Marble's eyes, and when it clears away he finds himself standing alone amongst a jostling crowd of strange faces, crushing a bit of paper in his clenched right hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARIONETTA.

He looks at it wonderingly as it lies in a crumpled ball on the palm of his hand, then slowly and dreamily begins to unfold and smooth it out. There are some words traced on it in pencil, in characters that have but a faint resemblance to Bertram's handwriting. It is hard to make any sense of them, they are so smudged and faint; but Dr. Marble perseveres, and at last contrives to read the following:—"Dear Arthur,—My last request. See to the welfare of Marie de Mailly's child. Lives at No. 42, Rue de Gil Blas. Father is still living, but don't know where. It adds twofold to my pain to think that Marie gave the little one into my charge, and that I am not able to guard her. If I could know she was safe with you or your mother—." Here the paper is torn partly away. The next

words are, "The heaviest part of my misfortune, I write this, hoping you may find some way of giving or sending it to you." Then the signature, "BERTRAM MESSETER."

Dr. Marble folds up the little scrap of torn and crumpled paper with fingers tender and careful as those of an accepted suitor handling the *billet-doux* from his lady-love, folds it up, and hiding it away in his coat, walks hurriedly away from the court, pushing his way impetuously through the crowd at the entrance into the pale winter sunlight beyond.

Bertram has done his friend many a good turn since they have known each other, but I misdoubt me if ever he did him a greater service or ministered more comfort to his heart than when he left the hastily-scribbled bit of paper containing his last request in the doctor's hand as he wrenched his own away. When a mind is stunned with grief, a spirit bowed, almost broken with sorrowful apprehensions, the hand that rouses saves, the voice that stimulates to action relieves.

Dr. Marble, as he walks rapidly down streets and through squares in the direction of Marie de Mailly's house, feels the burden of his fears lightening, the gloomy hopelessness of his sorrow perceptibly clearing. He must be up and doing; he will not rest, he will never rest, till Bertram is by his side again with the cloud vanished from his brow, the foul stain washed from his name. He would find a way to bring about this consummation; there always was a way to effect a strong purpose if one only looked and strove long enough and hard enough, and he would make it his one object, his first aim, to right the youth who was more to him than a brother—the youth whose name would one day ring throughout Europe in "a song of wonder and woe," and before whose genius the world should do homage. What it is to be young, and hopeful, and healthy!

Dr. Marble was barely half an hour walking from the police-court to No. 42, Rue de Gil

Blas, and yet when he arrived at the last-mentioned locality the colour had returned to his face, the steady light to his blue eye, the firmness of repose to his face.

There is nothing remarkable about the house he pauses before. It has its counterpart, in the way of stone and mortar, lath and plaister, on each side of it. Two high, well-built abodes, with wide-opened windows, whence faces more or less bright peer out. Dr. Marble looks at them, and then at the shut casements and lowered blinds above the steps he stands on, and his colour fades a little again. He rings the bell, and waits; but no one answers it: and the solemn veiled windows make no sign. He rings a second time, and, after a-while, he hears a movement within—a muffled footfall—and then the door is opened gently; and turning quickly (he has been standing with his back to the door), he encounters the gaze of a pair of heavy, swollen, tear-dimmed eyes. He

looks at them, and they look at him; and, as he gazes, he stands in dumb and sorrowful forgetfulness.

Presently a voice, hoarse and weak from weeping, asks, in French, "What he wishes; what his errand is?"

And he starts, and suddenly becomes aware that a woman is standing before him—by her dress apparently a *bonne*, or nurse—and that he is staring at her, as if he has never seen such a commodity before.

"*Pardon*," he stammers; "*j'étais un ami de Mdlle. de Mailly, et je vondrais voir sa petite fille.*" "It was her request"—(he will explain the details presently, thinks the doctor to himself)—"her last request, that I should take charge of the child. My name is perhaps familiar to you—Dr. Marble, of La Belle Vere, in Rue de Lablache?"

"Yes; the name is known to her," the sad looking *bonne* replies; and, motioning the doctor to step inside, she leads the way up

two or three pairs of stairs, right up to the top of the house; and, opening a door leading into a back room, she apologises for the stream of light and sunshine that issues from it, saying,—

"The little one does not understand—she is frightened when I darken the room; and the windows look out the back garden, so I thought it would not matter."

"No, no; of course not," the doctor mutters mechanically, and both enter softly, the woman closing the door behind her.

For a moment Dr. Marble, blinded by the sudden light, can distinguish nothing. Presently, however, his eyes take in the details of the picture before him. This is the picture he sees—not an uncommon one, perhaps, but none the less pretty and touching for that. A carpetless floor, polished by the ceaseless friction of active little hands and feet, and strewed with toys and picture-books; a pair of high-backed chairs, fastened together by a

bit of string, standing before a large arm-chair, that has evidently served as a chariot for some tiny Jehu; but it is empty now, and the restive steeds (*i.e.*, a pair of cane-bottomed chairs) are left to their own wild wills. Tired out with her playing,—and tired also with an uncomprehended sadness in her little heart,—Marionetta lies curled upon the floor fast asleep. A slanting sunbeam rests lovingly on the fair, tumbled curls, and on the tiny hand, laid on the childish heart in an attitude of unconscious pathos. The dark lashes, resting softly on the fair rounded cheek, are wet, as if some faint mysterious hint of the sorrow that had befallen her had crept into the little sleeper's dreams.

Dr. Marble approaches nearer, and, bending down, he gazes with sorrowful intentness at the sleeping child. She stirs uneasily under his gaze, and, half stretching out her little arms, whispers entreatingly, "Maman." Dr. Marble catches the word, and sighs involuntarily, heavily.

As he does so—as if disturbed by the presence of grief so near her—the little one opens her eyes (her wide, beautiful grey eyes, like her mother's), and gazes with the serious gravity of over-powering wonder at the kind face bending over her. Then the soft lips begin to tremble and pout. She is on the verge of bursting into tears; but the doctor, well used to children by reason of his profession, and loving them by reason of his tender heart, takes her up in his arms so gently, and with such soothing words and caresses, that the catastrophe is averted, and Marionetta changes her mind, and smiles confidingly at the young surgeon.

"Would she like to see his watch?"—Yes, of course she would; and the doctor's gold repeater is grasped in perilous fashion by the small unsteady hands, and held up against the little listening face.

"How old is Missy?" the doctor asks.

But Missy doesn't know, and is too busy listening to the pretty bells in the watch to think. The pale-faced nurse answers for her,—

"Mdlle. Marionetta is five years old; just five years old, yesterday."

The doctor bows. "Very fine child."

"Will you come home with me?" he asks, addressing the busy investigator of his watch.

"No!" she answers, shaking the watch to make it tick faster.

"Why not? Don't you like me?" he persists.

The grave, preoccupied, grey eyes look up for a moment, and apparently the cursory glance gives satisfaction; for the baby lips make answer,—

"Yes; I like oo' much."

"How much?"

The little thing stretches out the first finger and thumb of her right hand to their widest extent, and indicating them with her other hand, nods the bright head, and says,—

"That much; but I love maman a great deal more."

The doctor draws her closer to him, and, pressing the fair head down upon his shoulder, he asks,—

"And how much do you love maman?"

The little creature pulls her head away from his caressing hand, drops the watch, and, sitting there on his knee, stretches out both her arms as wide apart as possible, and with kindling eyes and chubby cheeks flushing with the exertion, she announces triumphantly,—

"As much as that, and a great deal more."

A sudden sob—a hard, tearless sob—follows this childish declaration of affection, and with hands pressed over her face, the nurse glides softly from the room. The child looks at her strangely; then struggling down from the doctor's knee, she takes hold of one of his hands with both hers, saying entreatingly,—

"I want to go. I want to go maman. Take me to maman."

"Not to-day, darling; but some day Marionetta shall go to maman."

He puts his arms round her again, and tries to lift her on his knee, but she pulls away from him, stamping with little impatient feet, and crying,—

"But to-day—to-day. I want to see her now. Maman, maman! I must go to her. I will go to her. Take me: oh! take me!" Then bursting into a passion of tears,—"I hate you; I hate you. I will not; I will not."

"Marionetta must be quiet or she cannot go to maman."

In an instant the cries are hushed, the sobs choked back, and the tears dashed away with two impetuous hands, while a trembling little voice asserts,—

"I am quiet—quite quiet now, and I will be so good if you will take me to maman."

He lifts her on his knees again, and, tenderly smoothing the rumpled curls, and drying

the tearful eyes, he whispers all sorts of gentle promises potent to beguile the ear of infancy. She listens docilely and attentively for some time, then presently, with a persistency that surprises him in so young a child, she asks pertinently,—

"But when are you going to take me to maman?"

"You will come and see my maman first, won't you?"

"No."

"But your maman wants you to."

The little face contracts again; the mouth quivers,—

"Did she say so? Are you sure? are you sure?"

"Yes, darling."

"Then let me go to her quite soon afterwards" (the tears raining down afresh, the little frame convulsed); "quite soon, quite soon."

"Yes, yes; quite soon, quite soon." And

as he sits rocking the tiny, sobbing form in his arms, the doctor keeps on crooning and singing the words over as a lullaby,—"Quite soon, quite soon."

After awhile, when the sobs have lulled, and the tears (so quickly dried from childish cheeks) have ceased to flow, he bends down over her, and asks softly if he shall tell her a story.

"O yes, please; only not about ghosts" (with a little shiver and clutch on his arm, for the room is already growing dusk with the early shades of a winter twilight).

"No, not about ghosts. Well, there was once a little girl just as old as you are, and her name was Lucie, and she had a kind mother."

"As kind as my maman?"

"Yes, quite as kind as your maman. And one day Lucie's mother had to go away."

"Like mine?"

"Yes. And she left Lucie with some kind

friends to take care of her, and told her to be very good while she was away, and that some day she should send to fetch her."

"Soon?"

"Yes, soon she would send to fetch her."

"But Lucie wouldn't promise for a long time. She was so sorry her maman was going away, that she did nothing but cry."

"Like me?"

"Yes. And her maman told her not to cry; that she must grow brave and strong and good, and that then she should send for her."

"Soon—soon," the piteous little voice puts in.

"Yes; soon. So Lucie promised, and her maman went away." (A deep drawn sigh from the little bosom pressed against his heart warns the doctor not to linger on this incident). "And Lucie kept her promise, and she grew so strong and good and brave. And one day——"

"Her maman came back. O! do make her maman come back!"

"No, her maman didn't come back; but one day a messenger — a beautiful messenger, with shining wings and a white dress—came to take Lucie home to maman."

"And Lucie went with her, and was so glad—so glad."

"Yes; only first the beautiful messenger asked her whether she had kept her promise, and had been good and patient since her maman went away, and then when Lucie said 'Yes,' she took her in her arms and kissed her, and carried her home to maman."

"And her maman was glad to see her?"

"Yes, very glad."

"And she never went away from Lucie any more?"

"No, no; never any more."

"Stayed with her for ever and ever."

"Yes, for ever and ever."

Silence for a little while, and then the

doctor feels two little hands clutching his in the darkness, and a childish voice, with an unchildish quiver of suppressed grief in it, asks—

"If I am very good and patient, will maman send a beautiful messenger to fetch me, like Lucie's maman did?"

"Yes, *chère petite.*"

"Will she send soon—very soon?"

"Yes," and as he speaks the word, the doctor bends down, and kissing the child's fair open brow, prays that his affirmative may not prove prophetic.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PARSONAGE.

On the outskirts of that prosaic town, Huddersfield, there stands a parsonage. It is not, as the reader no doubt instantly conjectures it to be from its locality, at all gloomy or Harworthian in aspect. On the contrary, it is a well-built, solid, cheerful-looking mansion, standing in its own grounds (*vide* advertisement in a local paper), when the Rev. A. Marble (present incumbent) and family went to the seaside for three months, and the said "estate" was to let at a moderate rent for that time. However, we all know what advertisements mean, and, *entre nous*, Fleetwood Parsonage's "grounds" consist of an old-fashioned kitchen-garden at its back, and a good-sized strip of lawn in front, of a rather neglected appearance, which, as it does service as cricket-ground for the parson's boys, is

hardly to be wondered at. Stay, I was very nearly forgetting the one acre of field beyond the garden at the back, where a solitary Alderney feeds, and sleeps, and chews its cud, and is withal placidly happy after the fashion of bovine animals generally. To-day, however, even its cow-like serenity is disturbed, a serenity deeper, calmer in its good-humoured indifference than that of the most nonchalant pig, for pigs are greedy, and greediness being a passion, there must be a certain amount of excitement attending it. Witness pigs feeding; their snouts are buried deeper than is at all necessary in the trough; their bodies are agitated, their tails gyrating, their dignity of deportment gone. And cows; when are they to be seen in a hurry, or eager, or hasty? They are hungry—they must be hungry sometimes—and yet who ever saw them "cropping" the grass otherwise than with decorum, with patience, with dignity? I remember once seeing a half-starved heifer, gaunt, bony,

haggard, turned into a field of clover (its owner, unable to provide for it, having sold it to a rich farmer). Poor animal! it could hardly walk. It stood some minutes surveying the goodly feast spread out before it with grave composure; then it bent its head, and I expected to see it seize the sweet herbage in its teeth, and swallow mouthfuls of it whole, until the cruel craving of nature should be satisfied; but no, it did nothing of the sort. With a sniff, of apparent indifference and languid disdain, it sank down in the soft, delicious mass, and remained in that position, with half-closed eyes, in sleepy contentment for the space of half an hour; at the end of which time, returning to my post of observation, I discovered it feeding, it is true, but with what unhasting dignity! what absolute calmness! pausing every now and then to switch its poor thin tail with grave remonstrance at the flies buzzing round it. Alas! how I envied its nonchalance, for my heart

was young and passionate, and to relieve its wild hunger I had snatched at forbidden fruit and found it poison—sweet, sweet as manna, but deadly as the sting of an asp. But with that experience this story has nothing to do. It is not an autobiography, not an unfolding of the writer's heart, but a tale of men and women whom he has met, and known, and loved.

So, to return to the Alderney that is disporting itself in the Rev. Mr. Marble's one acre of marshy sward. I think I observed that it has been exhibiting signs of unwonted excitement. It is at present looking over the gate with some amount of interest, a piece of emotion it has not been guilty of for years; and I think one must overlook it, for the glad, ringing cheers that the wind is bearing in its direction are enough to stir even the stagnant blood of a cow! The shouts are proceeding from amongst branches of the elm tree on the croquet-ground, on which are perched,

in positions of imminent peril to their necks, the Rev. Mr. Marble's three madcap boys, in age ranging from nine to fourteen. Their mouths are open to their widest extent, and their caps waving frantically, and their clear young voices raised to the highest pitch in a regular school-boys' "three times three." They stop at last from sheer want of breath, and "take sights" from their severally elevated and hazardous positions, each and all of which command a view of the short avenue and a bit of the road beyond.

"There's the carriage; I recognize Arthur's white hat," cries Tommy, the fourteen-year old, nearly toppling over in his excitement.

"You said you saw it before we gave that last cheer, you duffer, and it was nothing but an old woman with a sack of potatoes," remarks his youngest brother, disrespectfully, craning his long, young neck in the direction Tommy is pointing.

"No, but this is, really; look, look! if this isn't our pony-trap I'll eat it."

"It is, it is!" bursts from the other two brothers, as they catch a glimpse of the vehicle indicated advancing rapidly along the road towards the avenue gate, and simultaneously they renew their shouts of boyish welcome.

"Boys, boys, what are you making such a noise about?" cries Mrs. Marble, appearing at the hall-door with a gay coloured shawl over her head. As may be imagined the question is not heard by her three hopefuls, who continue using their lungs as before. The comely black-eyed matron smiles, and descending the steps, she advances to the elm tree. She is just about to renew her remonstrances, when she herself hears the sound of wheels, and catches sight of the pony-carriage turning in at the gate. She smiles again—she has a face that looks formed for smiling, round, smooth, full, with dark good-humoured eyes,

and wide pleasant mouth, with a perfect row of strong white teeth. She smiles again, for her mother's heart is glad to welcome back her first-born, her handsome grown-up boy, her clever Arthur, who has already begun to make a name in the medical profession. There is a gap of a great many years between him and his young brothers, an unnatural gap, a significant gap. Mrs. Marble's face is sunny and cheerful enough now, but time was when Arthur (then a little boy of eight) can remember seeing it worn and white with grief, and watching, as bending over him, she told him he must be mother's comfort now, for his three dear little sisters had gone to God, and he had put his little arms round her neck, and had stroked her face and said, he would always be good and stay with her, and not go away to God like Nannie and Amy and baby had gone, and he thought it was very unkind of them, and should he ask God to send them back, and Mrs. Marble had kissed the tender,

protesting baby-lips many times, moistening the pretty flaxen curls with bitter, heart-wrung tears, and then with quiet tread and red eyes, she had gone in gentle wifely care to comfort her husband. Soon she was herself again, as far as outward appearance and conduct went. The same cheerful smile, the same ready, active sympathy with the poor of her husband's parish. Only on Sunday the servants remarked (what do they not remark) that Missis shut herself up in her room for an hour or two in the afternoon; and once Ann, the housemaid listening at her door, heard a low sobbing. The minister's wife was looking at a few bits of wreck, left by the cruel wave of scarlet fever, that had entered her dwelling and swept away in one week, her three little fair-haired daughters. A little pair of worn red shoes in which baby's feet took their first unsteady steps, some ringlets of flaxen hair shorn from little aching heads tossing in feverish unconsciousness—a bruised

and battered doll, with only one eye, that Nannie had asked for the day before she died, a wooden horse, sans tail, sans mane, and yes, it had *one* leg left—the "dear pony" that Amy's hot lips had murmured about at the same time that Amy's hot hand had pushed away Mamma's face, because "she didn't like strange peoples looking at her." These are the precious relics that Mrs. Marble steals away on Sunday afternoons to kiss and cry over—these are the sorrowful momentos she allows her motherly heart to gloat over for two short hours in the week, and then hides them away and goes about her household business and parish work, with so cheerful a face, and so sprightly a manner, that no one, not even her husband, guesses how drearily the void and silence in the mother's heart is aching—aching. She stands still, smiling, but with something like tears dimming her bright black eyes, as the pony carriage is brought to a stop before her, and

her tall comely son alights, holding in his arms a little fair-haired girl, just the age of Nannie when she died. The three boys scramble—jump—fall from the elm tree like so many monkeys, and make a rush at their big brother. The doctor, however, sees the meditated assault, and stops it in time.

"I say, stand off, you fellows—I've got something breakable in my arms, wait till I give it to mother, and then I'll tackle you."

So saying, he places what looks like a loosely arranged bundle of cloaks and scarfs and shawls into his mother's arms, and folding his own around her in loving-wise, he kisses her fondly.

"Arthur, I do believe you have given me the poor child upside down—where is its head?" demands Mrs. Marble, in laughing dismay.

Two tiny hands struggle out from under the cloak, and a sweet childish voice begs to be allowed to go back to "Artur" again.

"She's all right," says the doctor laughing, as he folds back the shawl from the little sunny head.

"Little darling," ejaculates his mother, as the child turns her grave, beautiful eyes upon her new possessor.

"Are you going to take me to mamma?" she demands, after a moment's scrutiny.

Mrs. Marble kisses the little face without a word, and then bows her forehead on the child's black dress, to hide a sudden rush of tears, as she carries her into the house. During the transit from the lawn to the drawing-room, the child makes no remark, utters no remonstrance. Her little cheeks brighten, her eyes glisten as if in anticipation of some jocund sight, some pleasant surprise. Arriving in the drawing-room, Mrs. Marble puts her down gently, and turning away quickly that the child may not see her tears, buries her face in her hands and sobs and cries, as she has not cried since her babies

were taken from her. Presently she feels little fingers trying to pull her hands away from her face.

"Why are you crying? I don't like it, why don't you take me to mamma?" asks Marionetta's impatient little voice. Then as she receives no answer, she persists, "Are you going to take me to mamma, are you—are you?"

"Yes," sobs poor Mrs. Marble, not in the least knowing what she is assenting to.

"But you have not got any wings, and your dress is not white—white like an angel's," objects Marionetta, pouting and frowning and nearly crying.

At this moment the Rev. Mr. Marble enters. He is like his eldest son, very like him, only his hair and moustache instead of being a rich chestnut are white, and his blue eyes dim. The same open brow, the same genial smile, the contour of the face, the form of his features, nose, mouth, chin, the fac-simile

of the doctor's—rather we should say—Dr. Arthur Marble is the counterpart of his father. The likeness extends further than mere outward appearance. The son inherits his father's nature as well as his pleasing exterior, a heart void of guile, gentle, generous, brave and tender, and honest as the day. A rich inheritance truly, yet not one calculated to earn for the doctor what the world calls success, a deeper peace, a more enduring happiness it is indeed capable of bestowing, a "peace that passeth understanding," a happiness independent of, and unconnected with the things of time, and that lives beyond the grave.

The vicar is a little astonished at the tableau presented to his eyes as he enters the drawing-room. His wife kneeling by the table crying her heart out, and a tiny, elfish looking little girl, standing bewildered and tearful in the middle of a confused mass of shawls, cloaks, etc., that strew the floor.

Instantly she sees him, the child extricating herself with no little agility from the encumbering wraps, springs towards him crying piteously.

"She says she is going to take me to Maman, but she hasn't got any wings, and she does nothing but cry and hide her face, and—and—I don't believe she knows the way."

The clergyman lifts the little one in his arms, soothing her with words and caresses, and bending down by his wife, he kisses her forehead and tear-wet hands; whispers in her ear some words of loving sympathy, and then still holding Marionetta in his arms, he quietly passes out of the drawing-room, closing the door behind him. As he passes the hall, chatting to the child in his arms, he meets his son just coming in.

"Holloa, where are you taking Marionetta to?" he asks; he has already seen his father since his return.

"The mother is a little upset with ——." The vicar pauses expressively, and glances at the grave little face near his own. "Where is her nurse?" he continues. "I thought you said you were going to bring her French nurse along with her!"

"So I have, only the trap wouldn't hold us all—Marie's maid is walking from the station, I should think she must almost be here by this."

"Well, send her to the library when she comes, meanwhile I will take care of this wee one."

"Marionetta has forsaken me," says the young man playfully, addressing the child. "Marionetta doesn't love Arthur any more now."

"Yes, I do," (with little arms stretched out for him to take her). "I love 'oo better than anybody except Maman."

Still laughing, the young man stoops down and kisses half-tenderly, half-playfully, the

little out-stretched baby hands. "I hope you'll be of the same mind a few years hence, darling," he says wistfully, as his father bears her away; "if you grow up half as pretty as you are at present."

"Arthur," remonstrates the vicar, "I won't have you say such things to the child, for though perhaps she can't quite understand them now, it won't be long before she does, and little girls don't need to be taught they are pretty."

CHAPTER X.

"Whatever crazy sorrow saith
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly longed for death.—*Two Voices.*

DR. MARBLE'S EXPERIMENT.

On the following Sunday evening Arthur Marble is in Paris again. There was no particular need for him to hurry back to the scene of his labours, but he felt it impossible for him to remain away from the careless city, in the heart of which his friend lay imprisoned and lonely. He must be near him, though the thick, impenetrable walls of *le prison de* ——, should still separate them more effectually and completely than if they stood on opposite shores, with the whole wild waste of the Atlantic roaring between them. He must be near him, if only to cool his forehead—aching with a thousand plans and projects for his friend's deliverance—against the cold iron bars that have been interposed

between them by so cruel a fate. After taking some refreshment at his apartments in the Rue de Lablache, he puts on his hat and overcoat, for the night is cold, and strolls in the direction of the prison where Bertram is confined. There is a bright moon, and the clear, mistless sky, so seldom seen in the more dense and foggy atmosphere of our island home. The young man walks along with his head bent, his hands in his pockets, and an extinguished cigar between his lips, buried in anxious brooding thought. He reaches the jail at length, and pauses—without looking up—before it, as if by instinct. Cold and white it stands in the pale winter moonlight, chill and oppressive in its silent, cruel strength as the phantom of a sick brain. A sentinel paces slowly up and down before the massive building; his black shadow moves restlessly across the white patch of moonlight intervening between Arthur Marble and the prison, and the latter thinks of the

demon guarding the Castle of Despair. He walks up to the sentinel, and accosts him, asking in French,—

"In which part of the prison is Mons. Messeter confined?"

The sentinel stares at the young Englishman vacantly, then laughs slightly, shrugs his shoulders, and moves on.

Dr. Marble puts out his hand and arrests him.

"May I walk round the prison?" he asks.

"*Mais certainement.* Monsieur cannot get very close to it; there are railings all the way round, except just here," the sentinel answers civilly enough, for the doctor, as he asks the question, presses a piece of money into his hand.

Dr. Marble walks about half-way round the building, then stops and leans listlessly against the iron railings that preclude his near approach of its gloomy walls. The position, the prospect, are not enlivening; his pulses

beat low; his blood runs faintly; he is experiencing for, perhaps, the first time in his sanguine young life, the helpless, sickening sensation which people call "a sinking heart." Utterly unaccustomed to the nervous depressions, completely unused to the vague and fearful apprehensions that torture morbid and imaginative temperaments, he does not know what to make of the unwonted feeling that is creeping over him. Is it a presentiment? is he never to see his friend again, and is the foreknowledge of their eternal separation vouchsafed to him in the chill tremour that shakes his hands, the irresistible sadness that bows his head? Am I going to be ill? is, doctor-like, his next reflection. That would be the crowning misfortune, indeed, if he were to fall ill and die. Poor Bertram! his last friend, and last chance of succour would die with him! He rouses himself, resolutely shaking off the grip of Death's grim daughter Despair. He feels for his

fusee-box, relights his cigar, and resumes his stroll. It is very dark at the back of the prison, black as moonless midnight the solemn shadow of the high building falls upon him as he advances. He goes on unswervingly, unfalteringly, wondering gloomily if the shadow of the walls *outside* the prison is so dark, what the fearful Egyptian dimness must be like that dwells *within.* He walks unheedingly, blindly as men go to meet their fate. Careless, absorbed, unconscious, he marches straight through the shadows to where a deeper shadow lies. Men have been pursuing shadows since the world began, so philosophers assert, using the word, shadow, to express a *nothing, an evanishing* delusion, not a gloom or shade. In truth men are not prone to go in pursuit of "glooms" or "shades," such, alas, are only too apt to fall around them and upon them without being sought. No, no, 'tis only bright shadows (using the word only in its chimerical sense)

that lead men and women such wild, fruitless will-'o-the-wisp dances over the wide, pleasant earth, only sparkling waters shining and beckoning to them over miles and miles of life's dull desert sand that they hasten towards, panting and eager to assuage their soul's bitter draught. Happy for them if the clear water is never approached, the sparkling lie never discovered; these have still their dreams to comfort them. Those who are still deluded, have still hope; the eyes that have seen the spring of their life fade, shrivel, disappear before them, can never look forward more, save to the dark, deep river of death; those who have once grasped the bright shadow, in the pursuit of which no obstacle could check, no persuasions deter them, are aware henceforth, as they stand with empty hands, of a darkness and a chill upon them in the brave, bright light of noon; by the blazing hearth, a darkness and a chill; for evermore, a darkness and a chill. Dr.

Marble, be it observed, is in the pursuit of no shadow, bright or dark; yet, nevertheless, he is nearing one, his foot is only a span from it; a shadow that will lead him many a league and elude him many a day. He sees the deeper darkness at his feet, he bends over it; it takes form and substance; it resolves into personality. "A woman," mutters the doctor, and throwing away his cigar he kneels down in the shadow beside the shadow, and raises it in his arms. Yes, a woman, white-faced, helpless, almost unconscious. Slowly a pair of dark-lashed eyes open and look at him. The doctor has only once before seen eyes like those uplifted to his face, and a strange thrill passes through him, with the conviction that he is holding a murderess in his arms. He nearly drops his burden in his sudden, involuntary recoil. "Juliet!" The girl's lips move, but the power of speech has left her. "Why are you here?" No answer in words, but the

deep eager eyes turn from his face and gaze towards the prison-walls, while a feeble hand is raised, pointing tremulously through the shadows, in the same direction. "Complete exhaustion, nervous and physical, a few more hours of lying in the cold will probably be fatal," is the doctor's hurried reflection. "Aye, as fatal as that confounded dagger in poor Marie de Mailly's heart." And then his arms tremble and his face whitens as he thinks of his friend just inside those cruel walls, separated from him, perhaps for ever! the cause of the separation lying in his arms. Juliet's eyes close again, and he knows by the heavier pressure on his arm that she is unconscious. Shall he lay her down and go his way; it is none of his business if she chooses the rails outside Bertram's prison to lay her head against and sleep her long sleep. Nay, there would be something decidedly appropriate in such a denouement, and the death would not be a painful one. His arms

relax, and the girl falls away from them and lies half on the pavement, half against the rails. Her head droops backward and the moonlight falls upon her face, passionate even in its unearthly pallor of lips and brow, defiant in spite of veiled eyes and pinched nostrils. The doctor gazes at her curiously and attentively, as if the fainting girl presents a physiological study requiring minute professional investigation.

"Strong, abnormally strong passions, a dare-devil recklessness, no principle, no pride, no fear, no restraint save her own curbless will, no guide save her own wild instincts. Such a nature in a man would make one tremble for his future; but in a woman, young, beautiful, friendless!—well, well, she has begun her work of ruin, she needs only to go on as she has commenced, and—and I pity the devil himself when he gets her!" says the doctor, ending his muttered commentary with rather more force

than finish, and peering round uneasily into the darkness, as if he half expected to see the gentleman whom he has commiserated, steal through the gloom to claim and carry away the unconscious form at his feet. His satanic majesty not putting in an appearance, you must excuse him dear reader—he is so full of engagements, and although I am aware that a *Mephistopholean* advent would be very effective just here, his lordship is unable to oblige me on the plea of urgent business elsewhere. Dr. Marble kneels down by the girl again and lays his hand upon her heart; it is still beating faintly, flutteringly, the wild life has ebbed very low, but it is still there.

"Another hour-and-a-half at the most," says the doctor to himself; he rises to his feet again, pulls his cigar-case from his pocket, chooses with much care and deliberation the most tempting-looking "roll of tobacco leaves" contained in it, puts it be-

tween his lips, lights it, buttons up his coat, and turns to go. Ah, Dr. Marble! Dr. Marble! I can't help laughing at you,—you of all men trying to play the cold-blooded villain; the very stars are twinkling with the humour of the idea, and as for the moon, it is grinning from ear to ear. He has no more intention of leaving the girl to perish, dear reader, than you or I would have in his place, only just now he thinks he has; he positively flatters himself that he is about to march back in unconcerned fashion to his supper and fireside, without another thought of the still, stiff form propped up against the prison rails. The best men are subject to delusions, more or less laughable. Dr. Marble proceeds exactly eight yards on his way, when he stops; he recollects suddenly that he has left the girl in a sitting posture, that she *would die easier lying down.* Of course he wishes her to pass out of the world in the most comfortable manner possible, so

he retraces his steps, bends down and again raises Juliet in his arms. He does so rather hastily; the sudden movement rouses her. The deep eyes open again, and again regard him, but this time there is no recognition in their gaze. "You will die if you lie here," he says, roughly, still supporting her. The white lips part, quiver as if to smile; the breast on which his hand rests, heaves slightly as with a sigh of relief, and even as he watches her, Juliet relapses into unconsciousness.

Dr. Marble will probably say in future days that the reason his heart melted within him at this crisis in his life, was the exceeding gentle, and touchingly submissive look on the girl's face as it lay on his arm; but my humble opinion is that had she looked as fierce and revengeful as Queen Eleanor when poisoning Rosamond, the doctor's act would have been the same. He does not lay her down on the cold pavement, that she

may die easier, on the contrary, he lifts her higher in his arms and begins to chafe her hands. "Juliet, rouse yourself," he urges; his warm breath upon her cheek; his warm hand upon her heart. There is no response, no movement; the girl's face is growing more drawn and ghastly every moment. "She's dying before my very eyes,—by Jove, I can't stand it!" ejaculates the young surgeon with real dismay, as he feels the fluttering, feeble pulse beneath his hand grow fainter, slower, almost imperceptible. He has no brandy, no spirit, no stimulant about him of any description. There is only one thing to be done,—only one way to hold back the failing, fleeting, almost suspended animation. He does not hesitate; bending over her, he lays his warm young mouth on the girl's bloodless, rigid lips, already set and glued as for their eternal silence. Is it too late? Will they never unlock, never speak any more? Dr. Marble as he feels

the stiff, icy lips beneath his, begins to be afraid it is. Still he perseveres mouth to mouth, breathing in his vigorous abundant life to reanimate, and restore, and renew the flickering spark of existence that is so nearly fled, so almost extinct. His efforts are rewarded at length; the girl's chill lips relax and part with a long quivering breath; her spirit comes back from the very confines of life, comes back shivering and confused into the cold still body it had forgotten and almost forsaken for a space,—and the honest, guileless heart that has recalled it from its long journey, experiences a throb of real pleasure at its scarce hoped for return.

Well, Dr. Marble, you have done a kind act, a gentle, disinterested, christian deed, but—but, what do you expect for it? Virtue is not rewarded here, you know, whatever our copy-books and grandmothers may say to the contrary, and it isn't always its own reward either, and—and in fact I have not

anything for you—nothing, at least, that I would dare offer you. A little dross, a few gilded pleasures. I could not insult your great heart with these, and the thrice-refined gold of a true-hearted happiness is not mine to give. What do you say? Will you forego your wages down here and have the amount entered up yonder, where I am told the interest is a hundred per cent, and the payment sure.

Confused and wondering, Juliet gazes into the kind face bending over her, and murmurs faintly, "Dr. Marble." "Aye, the same. Do you think you can stand if I support you; you must come away from here." She makes the attempt, and with the help of the doctor's arm, rises to her feet. "Thank you," she mutters, with white lips. "I think I can stand alone. I think I will go home." "But you cannot walk alone." "Yes, thank you; good-night." The doctor takes away his supporting arm and watches her with a half-smile. She reels helplessly as soon as the

support is withdrawn, but with indomitable spirit she refuses to yield to the weakness. Making a great effort to steady herself, she contrives to catch hold of the railings just in time to prevent her falling. The doctor regards her for a moment as she leans there, then putting his arm round her again, draws her away from the cold iron bars. "You cannot walk; you can scarcely stand. I will carry you." "I will walk, if you will let me—let me lean on your arm." He does not speak, but keeps his arm round her, supporting her as well as he can, and slowly and pausing every now and then,—they walk away out of the shadows into the bright noisy streets. The doctor is aware from the drawn white face, firm-set mouth, and knitted brow of his companion, that it is sheer pluck alone that keeps her from falling, and forces her strengthless limbs to totter by his side. At the first place of refreshment he stops, and when he has made her swallow

a wine-glass of brandy mixed with water, and seen her eat a morsel of bread, he sits down by her side and begins, under cover of the noise and bustle of men and women, eating and drinking, and coming and going, to ask her a few questions:—

"When did you have anything to eat last?"

"I don't remember."

"Did you have any breakfast this morning?"

"When was this morning—I don't remember this morning."

"Where did you sleep last night?"

"Last night" (ponderingly), "was it a moonless night, last night—dark—very dark, with only a few stars out?"

"Yes," answers the doctor, as with a flash the remembrance comes to him of pacing up and down, with his father, the little bit of lawn before the parsonage, till far into the night in question, and how he could scarcely see the old man's face though their arms were linked.

"Then I think—yes, it must have been last night that I woke and found myself leaning against the railings where you found me to-night. I remember watching a white, frightened-looking star, trembling just on the verge of a great storm-cloud. I felt sorry for it, all alone in the wide, angry heavens, and I watched it as long as I could see it—the black clouds came soon and swallowed it up. Poor star! and then I remember wondering, as I sank to sleep again, if it was as dreadful up there alone among those angry clouds—as it is down here alone among angry men and women."

The girl speaks very wearily and dreamily.

"Do you mean to say, you have been where I found you since last night?" asks the doctor, replying to the practical part of her sentence, and letting the star tirade pass unnoticed; nevertheless the dreamy, hopeless voice and pathetic words find an echo in a compassionate corner of his heart, and

echoes in that organ are hard to silence—especially if it happen to be a wide, capacious one like the doctor's.

"No!—not quite all the time—when the sun came out this morning I went into the town to get a drink of water, I was so thirsty. I wandered about after that for some time. I remember feeling very tired when I got back to the place where you found me, and lying down, and then I don't seem to remember anything more till I heard your voice, and saw your face bending over me."

"Do you wish to die?" asks the doctor, coolly, resolved to be practical even in discussing the question of suicide.

"Yes."

The girl's voice is faint and low, but there is no hesitation or doubt in the affirmative monosyllable, and her heavy, sorrowful eyes return the doctor's steady gaze without flinching.

"Then why do you take such a long,

round-about way to kill yourself? Starvation is such a tedious, lingering death, and though dying is a novel sensation to all of us, no doubt, yet one is apt to get tired of the process when it is spun out for some three days and nights; now I could give you something to drink, the taste of which would be rather pleasant than otherwise—you would feel no pain—no uneasiness, and three minutes after, you would be——"

The doctor hesitates, for it occurs to him that probably she would be in what is generally considered to be an undesirable place of residence, on account of the extreme heat that is said to characterize the said locality.

"Dead?"

"Yes, dead as a door-nail, or any other nail," he answers readily, all the more readily that he fancies he detects some dismay in the girl's voice and eyes as she utters the word; then as she remains silent, with

bent head, and hands nervously entwined, he goes on airily:

"Well, do you think of trying it? you come to my house—I am going there now—I can provide you with it directly; or, stay, it would save time to get it at a chemist's as we go along, there is one close here, and I can administer it and prevent any bungling. Will you come?"

Juliet looks at the young surgeon with some astonishment (she is too utterly worn-out and over-wrought to be *much* surprised at anything). She can hardly believe he is in earnest, but on meeting his grave blue eyes in the intent questioning depths of which there lacks no suspicion of laughter or irony perceiving that he means simply what he says—she rises up—a little unsteadily (the long fast and exposure have weakened her terribly), and laying her hand on his arm—

"Yes, I will come," she says, and there is no tremour in her voice.

Dr. Marble looks at her; there is no fear, no reluctance in the white face, only a great weariness.

"All right, only you must eat something more first, otherwise you will not have strength to walk there. Sit down, and I will fetch you something tempting."

The doctor intends to make a psychological experiment. He does not believe any living creature, young, vigorous, healthy in mind and body—no matter how miserable and desperate—would voluntarily and deliberately take poison. He has as yet had no opportunity of testing the correctness of this theory; one presents itself now, and he resolves to profit by it. He procures a basin of strong beef-tea for Juliet, and constrains her to drink every drop of it. He waits till he sees the deadly paleness passes away from her cheek, the colour return to her full lip. He lays his hand on her wrist and feels the young life throbbing there in hurried but

strong pulsations, and then he rises and bids her follow him. The first chemist's shop they arrive at, he enters, motioning her to follow. He speaks to the chemist and orders him to put up something. Juliet does not hear what, and presently they are both in the street again. The doctor looks at his patient's face; it shows paler by the gas-lamps, but that may only be the effect of the cold air. "Now where will you go? St. Mary's yard is close by, or would you rather go back to Madame Fanile's and take the poison quietly, in your own room, before going to bed?

"No—no!" (with a trace of the old impetuosity), "not in that hole. I will die in the open-air, under the calm stars that look more kindly on me than human eyes ever will again. Let us go to the church-yard."

The doctor bows his head and they proceed in silence down the street, and opening the small iron gate (always left unlocked on

Sunday nights till midnight) of St. Mary's burying ground—pass through. The doctor sits down on a tombstone, and motions Juliet to sit on another in convenient proximity.

"Would you object to my smoking?" he asks presently, "it's a trifle cold here?"

Juliet shakes her head. He smokes for a few minutes in profound silence; he wants to give that romantic notion of hers about the stars, time to cool. At last she gets up—shivers—approaches him and asks for the bottle.

"Want to get to business, eh? Well, it *is* cold here and my supper must be ready by this time" (fumbling in his coat pocket for the bottle). "Ah, here it is."

He hands a little bottle, wrapped in paper, to Juliet. She takes it from him in silence—in silence turns away grasping it in her hand.

"I say," the doctor lays his hand upon her dress and looks up with admirably feigned anxiousness in his eyes, "you don't

mind my going—do you, as soon as you have taken it?—you see it would be so awkward for me if anyone were to catch me here with a poisoned woman. You don't mind dying alone do you?"

He sees the deep eyes flash with unconcealed scorn as she answers proudly:

"No, I would *rather* you would go at once—I prefer to be alone."

"Oh, thanks—you can go ahead if you like, I shall finish this cigar in three minutes, and then be off. Allow me to undo it for you."

He rises as he speaks, and takes the bottle from her hands. She watches him as he slowly tears the bit of paper from it, and then stretches out her hand for it with an impatient gesture. He is not to be hurried—he takes out the cork very deliberately and smells the contents of the bottle, afterwards places it in her hand with a careless bow.

"You had better drink the whole of it—the

more you take the sooner it is over," he says, coming closer to her.

The girl does not answer, she does not either see nor hear him. She is trying to understand that she is about to die—about to poison herself, that the end—the very end she has so often planned and thought about, so often longed for during the last few weeks, has come at last—*the very end.* Her fingers tremble—she raises the phial, and the faint sweet smell of the deadly draught greets her nostrils. She shudders a little, and as the bottle touches her hot, red lips they whiten and recoil. She lowers the bottle, and as she does so she catches sight of the young doctor's intent blue eyes watching her.

"It is not nice," she says naïvely—"it is nauseous; if I had something to take after it?" And the dark grey eyes look up at him, appealing as a child's.

The doctor, preserving the most perfect gravity, searches in his pocket and produces a

bit of sugar candy, a remnant of some he had bought for Marianetta the day before.

"It will take off the taste," he says, soothingly, as to some two-year old patient, contumacious about the imbibing of rhubarb. In truth she looks but a child as she stands there with parted lips and half-averted head, holding death in one hand, and a morsel of sweetmeat in the other.

The doctor takes his cigar from his mouth and knocks the ashes off against the headstone near him. "How old are you?" he asks quietly.

"Nearly sixteen."

"Not sixteen?"

He had thought her more—her womanly figure, her fearless independence, and above all the ungirlish fervour of her passion for Bertram had all combined to make him think her "a woman grown."

"You have made good use of your time," he adds slowly, with a concentrated wrathfulness.

How dared she, a mere child, make such havoc of three lives, all more worth than hers? She should have been in the school-room wearing pig tails and pinafores, or doing penance for her temper in a convent, or in some asylum for untoward children, till the devil was beaten out of her. She certainly should not have been left at large, to torment and wound her fellow creatures with the first wild passion of her untutored, almost savage nature.

"You have made good use of your time.—How many more lives—"

"Hush!" she interrupts hoarsely, "You have spared me your taunts till now, and now—now—in a few minutes they" (an awed look coming into her wild eyes) "will be asking me that question as I stand before the Great White Throne."

She raises the phial in her clenched right hand, all the youth goes out of her face, white, rigid, determined. She, the young girl shrinking from a distasteful draught, is

transformed into a desperate, despairing woman, holding death to her lips with hands steady, as though they fondled a wine cup.

The doctor perceives the metamorphosis, perceives also the fierce revolt of life against death, in the corpse-like whiteness that overspreads Juliet's face, in the shuddering, almost writhing of her strong young frame; and as the small resolute hands press the bottle to the ashen lips, while the deep eyes are veiled by lids fluttering in the mortal agony of outraged life, he learns that the human *will* is indomitable, supreme, regnant.

In an instant the bottle is lying at Juliet's feet, dashed into a thousand fragments against the adjacent tombstone; the crimson stain of the deadly fluid sullying its pure, moonlit marble.

Juliet stands, white, startled, a fragment of the broken bottle in her hand, staring at the young doctor.

"Fool!" he exclaims" (he is whiter than

his wont, and there is a kind of angry compassion in his voice), "you have committed a hideous crime. Do you wish to put yourself for ever beyond the power of making reparation? Do you wish for ever to forego the hope of being permitted to render some atonement?"

"Reparation! Atonement!" echoes the girl, and the words sound to Arthur Marble like the moaning of a lost soul wandering in the outer darkness. He goes on involuntarily as it were, pleading with the girl for herself.

"Aye, a full reparation—a complete atonement. Juliet, Juliet! you have all your life before you, what might you not do with your strong will, and brave talents, and power of endurance? what grand sacrifice might you not offer for the sins of your youth? what stains might you not wipe out with the heart-warm tears of your fervent nature? Say, are you ready to retrace your steps — to walk humbly

—to weep bitterly—up the steep dark hill of penitence. If you are, here is my hand upon it" (holding out his hand). "I will stand your friend through the long years, helping you, and smoothing your way as much as lies in my power."

She does not take his hand, she falls at his feet, trembling and crying. "But he is beyond all help—all power—and I—I have done it. I have brought this fate upon him. No pain that God or man can inflict, will ever sting me like that thought—no tears can ease the agony—no time can dull it."

"He is not beyond help, even now; at this moment there comes into my mind a thing that it would comfort him to know, if we could find a means of telling him."

He sees there is only one way to rouse the girl's desire for life, or hope; only one hand, and that a captive's

hand, bound and helpless, shrouded in prison gloom, that is strong to save her from sinking in the flood of misery her own wild will has wrought. His words have the intended effect. In a moment Juliet is on her feet, ready—alert—fearless.

"Tell me the thing that it would comfort him to know. I will find the means to let him know it."

"Marie's little girl—" (the face before him contracts with anguish, but the paroxysm is kept down—the anguish controlled almost as soon as seen) "he was anxious about her welfare—is safe in Yorkshire with my mother."

"And you want to let him know? he shall know it to-morrow."

"How?"

"I will enter his prison in disguise."

The girl presses her hands over her brow as if trying to clear her brain, and enable it to form a plan. Then she remains silent

for some moments—looking with absorbed, attentive eyes at the distant stars. Dr. Marble is also silent, watching her. "I have thought of a plan," she informs him suddenly; and the deep eyes turn from the stars, eager and resolute.

"It is getting late," he says, "you can tell me as we go along." And they walk away together out of the moonlit graveyard. Together, and his hand is holding hers—unconsciously.

CHAPTER XI

"The days get blurred, where never shines the sun."
(*Gregory and Margaret.*)

BERTRAM'S VISITOR.

THREE days have past since the events recorded in the last chapter; for three days and three nights Bertram has sat and lain and eaten between the dusky, dingy prison walls of *le prison de* ——. At least, so the jailor said, when he asked him some few minutes since "*Trois jours exactement moins un quart d'heure*, does Monsieur find the time heavy?" Messiter did not believe the assertion, nor did he respond to the question, the man must have made a mistake, he must have been sleeping at his post, men cannot change, as he, Bertram, had changed in *three days*, it was preposterous! why since he first entered these walls, he has fought "seven devils," and prevailed against them, and

then there has been a calm, a great dead calm for months; it must have been for months, it must; and to-day the devils have attacked him again, and he feels so weak and old from all the weary years he has past in this dark dungeon, that he is afraid they will gain the mastery over him this time. Three days! he laughs aloud, as he sits alone, at the very absurdity of the idea, and then starts nervously as the unwonted sound echoes through the little cell. Three days! why he remembers once, long ago, when Dr. Marble and he were young, hiring a yacht and going with him for a three days' cruise to the Isle of Man, and they had hardly any time to talk about anything except to tell each other how dazzlingly blue the sky was, and how gloriously fresh the breezes were that fanned their faces, as they lay so carelessly glad on deck; and as for *thinking*, the nearest approach he made to that was one starry night when he paced the deck with a cigar and wondered

dreamily what there would be in heaven to make up for the absence of a moonlit sea. How white its waters glimmered, and in what liquid rippling mumurs it spake to the ship's side about the wondrous things it held hidden in its mighty depths! And then that path across the waters—brighter and whiter than all the rest, over which the moon hung so lovingly—it led to heaven, or as he dreamed that night—to fame—to success—to love! He rises to his feet and begins to pace up and down his cell, which though circumscribed, is yet large enough to admit of some four or five steps each way. Three days—Ah! he has thought of a plan to find out if the jailor has deceived him as to the length of time he has been imprisoned in this hole. He will ask him for a mirror and learn the truth from the reflection of his own face. It will be smooth and youthful and his hair will be black, if the jailor has spoken the truth, but if on the contrary (as he thinks),

weeks, months have dragged their weary length along since he gazed last upon his friend's upturned, sorrow-whitened face, as he stood in the crowded court that fatal day—it will be wrinkled and worn, and his hair will perhaps be streaked with grey.

At this moment, the jailor enters, bearing the prisoner's supper (some dark looking bread or cake, and a glass of water), and a small oil lamp. The former he sets down on a sort of low slab stool that serves as a table, and the latter in a niche in the wall apparently made for that purpose. "This is your last night here, Monsieur," he remarks roughly, "and you had better make the most of it."

"Last night!—how—what do you mean?" demands Bertram, pausing in his walk and staring at the man.

"That to-morrow night at this time you will be aboard *La Veillarde* convict ship, bound for Cayenne, where you will spend the

next seven years of your life in picking oakum, or some such interesting occupation."

"Seven years!" echoes Bertram slowly, "that was what the judge said that day long ago, but it cannot be so long now—now that I have been so long in prison." Then hurriedly and passionately, "It's always dark in this accursed place, and there are no changes to reckon time by, no dawn—no twilight—or rather, it is always twilight—dim, murky, ghastly twilight, and I have lost count—all count" (a little wildly) "of the days that have gone by. Tell me, friend," (laying his hand on the official's rough coat and speaking softly and pleadingly) "tell me truly how many months—or weeks—or years have I been here?"

The rough old jailor gazes at the man with stolid surprise for a moment, then laughs a little but not unkindly, and there is a certain compassion in

his voice as he answers, "You asked me that question before, Monsieur, and I told you *three days*—three days and three nights; you came here Friday night and to-night is Monday night, Saturday—Sunday—Monday. The first is always the longest, the time will go quicker by and by.

"Saturday—Sunday—Monday."—Bertram repeats each word very slowly, drawing out and pronouncing every syllable distinctly, as if by lengthening the sound of the names of the three immense incredible days, he is trying to make them long enough and wide enough to hold the mighty load of pain he has borne, the long, long trance of anguish that has past since last he looked on the outside world. No! he cannot believe it, drag the syllables as he will: "Sat-ur-day—Sun-day—Mon-day." It is no use, he cannot cram a life-long sorrow and loneliness into *three days*! The idea of the mirror recurs to him. He immediately prefers his request for one to

the jailor. "*Un Miroir,*" *Ah! cela vamieux*; he has not lost his vanity—he wants to see how he looks without his love locks—"*Pas très mal, je vous assure, Monsieur.* Yes, yes! I will bring a mirror, and let you have a sight of your prison crop." So saying, the jailor whose heart is hard by custom rather than nature, departs, and the iron door swings to after him with a dull crash. He is not long gone, but when he returns Bertram is sitting on the one stool the cell contains, with his face burried in his hands in a fit of deep abstraction.

"*Le Voici,*" says the jailor, laying down a small hand-glass on the slab beside him. Bertram does not look up—nor stir. "Monsieur, I have something to ask you" (shaking him gently), "if Monsieur will listen."

Bertram lifts his head slowly.

"Well!"

"*Le pere Reboul* sends word that he is not able to come and pray with you to-night—

but as you start for Cayenne to-morrow—he has sent a Sister of Mercy whom he knows well, to pray with you, and comfort and exhort you. Shall I bid her enter? "Ah! you have not yet touched your supper; eat it man, you cannot live on air, and I will bring the sister to see you in a quarter of an hour."

"I will see no one," answers Bertram shortly; but the jailor either does not hear, or does not heed his words, for the only reply he makes is to bang the heavy door after him. As soon as he has gone, Bertram rises and lifts the hand-glass from the slab, lifts it eagerly, yet tremblingly, and—but the light is so dim, he cannot see his face—so he takes the little oil lamp in the other hand, holding it so that its light falls on the mirror and on his face. Can that be a reflection of his face—that wan boyish visage that confronts him with a look so strangely piteous in its hollow, wistful eyes, as almost to make

him weep? Ah! now its eyes are moistening, and the dark curls are cut away from the massive forehead, and—yes, it is his face—but it looks younger not older than when he saw it last. The pallor and thinness of the cheeks—the hollow eyes—the close shaved hair—all serve instead of ageing his appearance, to render more touching—more obvious his extreme youthfulness. Ah! may God have pity upon the wounds that bleed inwardly—upon those whose foreheads remain fair and unwrinkled, while their scarred hearts are slowly and surely breaking with a thousand pains—upon those whose souls the iron of an intolerable agony has entered—scorching and tearing in its course the very fibres of life itself, yet whose face (partly from a habit of self-control—an instinctive wish to bear a brave front) are calm and smooth, never a feature declaring nor a sigh betraying the deathly writhings of their tortured spirits. Aye, God pity them! for

the world's careless, superficial compassion (which is reserved for fretful wrinkles and loud complaints) can never reach to sooth the grand, desolate, defiant pain of heroes. Poor Bertram! his next action is hardly heroic, as with an impulse of passionate despair, he flings the hand-glass from him, and himself upon the hard stone floor. "Has the curse of immortality fallen upon me?" he cries wildly; am I never to die? O my God! can it only be three days—three days out of seven years? Surely hell is unnecessary, eternal punishment superfluous if human pain can so annihilate time, pretrifying hours, turning the minutes to lead, and bidding the days stand still, frozen and dumb as heathen gods before their gnashed and bleeding votaries. Three days! and I have undergone the emotions of a life-time—no, but twenty life-times! I have been—mad—sane—I have blasphemed like a devil, wept like a woman—

I have prayed—I have sworn—have been desperate—submissive—sorrowful—defiant." (The prison door opens and shuts, but Bertram as he lies moaning and raving does not hear it.) "I have remembered all my past—every incident of my childhood has been present with me—I have been young and old, and young again—I have been in hell—aye, and in heaven—I have heard the devils gloating over my misery, and I have heard thee, Marie, praying for me before High God."

As he utters the last words some one sighs close to him—a long, low, sobbing sigh. He knows it is a woman before he looks up—only women can draw such long, soft, tremulous breaths. He looks up quickly, half-expecting for the instant, to behold her he has named bending over him; instead, however, his eyes encounter a woman in the garb of a Sister of Mercy, standing a pace or two from him. He rises to his feet with alacrity, and vexed

that any one should have seen him in so abject an attitude, she demands with some abruptness, what she wants? and why she has come?

She does not answer, but still with bent head, she holds out a letter to him. He takes it with an expression of surprise. He knows the hand-writing. It is Dr. Marble's. He breaks the seal, bending down so as to hold the letter close to the little oil lamp, he reads as follows :—

"DEAR OLD CHAP—Keep up heart, all will yet be well. I have done what you wished about Marie's little girl (such a pretty, intelligent child), and she is already under my mother's care in Yorkshire. I took her there myself yesterday. The old lady is very pleased to have her. You know there are only boys in our family, and she always wished so for a girl. Marionetta could not be in better hands. I hear you are going to Cayenne. There is one thing to be said in

its favour, the climate is not unhealthy. Don't imagine you are to be kept there for seven years. If I don't see you out of this mess in three, and astonishing the natives with your dramatic powers, my name's not Dr. Marble, and

"'Let thistles grow instead of barley.'

"Dear old Bertram, this is a sad trial for you, but I know your brave heart and steady courage, and I am sure you will face it as heroically and defiantly as you did the gaping, yelling mob on Friday last. Be assured that Arthur Marble will not forget his friend, nor rest day nor night till he has him safe by his side once more. Your uncle is terribly cut up about this misfortune, he is staying with me at present, and he desires me to tell you that he is as fully assured of your innocence in the matter as he is of his three year old child, your cousin Bobby. He begs me also to incite you to bear it like a man, and show the world what true steel, *le plus grand acteur*

du mond, viz., Bertram Messeter, is made of. After all, what is a year or two at your age. You will be four-and-twenty at the end of the three years. This strange gloom and shadow on your early youth will only serve to render more brilliant, more fascinating the after glory and triumph of your genius. Take what care you can of your health—the life you will lead in Cayenne will not, I think, be injurious to it, if you can stave off that vampire—mental depression—a vampire which loves to suck away to the last drop the sweet life-blood of youth, and health, and strength. My heart is very sad and sorry, yet very full of hope for you. Good-bye, Berty, dear old Berty, don't forget me, and may God in heaven bless you. I am sending this letter by Juliet." (BERTRAM STARTS, BUT HE DOES NOT LOOK UP). "She says she is sure she can manage to gain admittance to your cell in the disguise of a Sister. I hope she will succeed. She is a brave girl, and loves you more than her

life; don't be angry with her, nor reproach her for my sake. Always for ever, your very loving friend, "ARTHUR MARBLE."

Some moments elapsed before Bertram can find self-control enough to look at the woman who has wrought his ruin; the cause—the perpetrator of all his misery. Juliet stands with her eyes still averted, her head still bent, trembling as women tremble in the presence of the man they love. He looks at her at last. Looks at her as the captain of a sinking vessel with a hundred passengers on board might look at the skulking ruffian who had bored the treacherous hole in his ship's side,—a look of loathing scorn, frozen by despair into the sternness of a deadly hatred. She feels his upbraiding eyes upon her—albeit hers are turned away—feels the condemning force, the scorching accusation of their gaze, withering her very soul, and with a low pain-fraught moan, as of a creature wounded to the death, she falls at

his feet. He shrinks and turns from her as we turn from a noisome reptile too foul for even our feet to crush and kill.

"You have delivered your message, you can go. Go," he says, at length, in a low, hollow voice, for her presence excites and oppresses him horribly; but she drags herself nearer to him and twines her hands about his feet.

He spurns her from him with a look of mingled wrath and horror, terrible to see. "Murderess!" he hisses from between his clenched teeth, "begone!"

She rises to her knees and lifts her beautiful death-white face to his, and answers resolutely:—

"I will not go until you say you forgive me; or send me where there is no forgiveness, either with God or man."

As she speaks, she holds forth to him, with one hand, a dagger that she has hidden in the folds of her dress, and with the other she lays bare the gleaming whiteness of her bosom.

Without speaking, Bertram grasps the weapon—grasps it savagely—eagerly. The devils that have been fighting so hard for this man's soul during the last three days are gaining the mastery now. His face grows distorted and hideous with revengeful passion, as he slowly raises the dagger above the kneeling girl.

Foolish, frantic Juliet! Are you not content with having destroyed your idol's chance of happiness on earth that you seek to blast for ever the prospect of his soul's eternal welfare?

She fixes her eyes steadily on the upraised gleaming steel, and smiles.

He has been accused of murder—why not make the accusation true? He has been punished as a murderer—why not make the punishment just? The woman before him merits death—why not administer justice and satisfy his revenge by stabbing her? So Bertram Messeter's tempters whisper, and the

dagger hangs poised and steady over the breast bared and waiting to receive it.

"*You will do her no hurt—you will seek no revenge.*"

His guardian angel trys to make him hear the words, but the devils have possession of his soul, and are making such a tumult there, her voice cannot be heard. The dagger is descending. O God!—O God! its aim is so true, so fell, it cannot fail to reach the desperate heart awaiting it. The blade gleams in its descent like the flash of an avenging lightning hurled from heaven. Juliet sees its vivid dazzle in the air above her, and then she feels its point upon her breast. It pauses there, as if arrested by an unseen hand, pauses at the threshold of the human life it was about to ravage—held back by angel-hands.

"*You will do her no hurt—you will seek no revenge.*"

Bertram hears the words at last—hears

them repeated by a thousand voices; hears them ringing through the dark, damp prison, like a trumpet call. Help has been afforded his guardian-angel in her great extremity, and as she clings to his arm—to arrest if only for a moment the fatal blow—thousands of angels have hastened to the spot, and his forgotten promise swells on Bertram's ears in a chorus of heavenly voices. The dagger falls from his nerveless hand. He covers his face, he groans, and presently Juliet hears him whispering the hated name, Marie's name, and praying her to forgive him.

"*Marie, belle ange, bien aimée, pardonnez moi je vous prie.*"

Tears began to trickle through his fingers, already worn and thin, as from some long illness, as in one of those quick revulsions of feeling which visit sudden, passionate natures, he whispers and pleads and murmurs like a chidden child. The girl kneeling before him rises to her feet, his whispered words

piercing her wild heart with a keener pain than any dagger thrust could have inflicted.

She rises to her feet, and stands confronting him with her deep eyes dim and desperate as a lost spirit's, and the heaving whiteness of her bosom stained with the thin stream of blood flowing from the little wound made in the delicate flesh by the dagger's point.

"Oh, why did you pause in your act of mercy?" she cries in low, despairing tones. "Why did you falter in what would have been the kindest blow man's hand ever dealt?"

"Her—her you murdered, has saved your life. I promised her not to injure you. Go! —do not tempt me further," mutters Bertram, brokenly, with face still hidden.

"Her revenge is complete to-night," the low, hopeless voice responds. "She has deprived me of my last desire—to die by your

hand. I will not ask you to forgive me. I see now pardon is impossible; only turn once to me before I go; let me see your eyes once more."

But Bertram, shuddering, still veils his face from her with one hand, motioning her away with the other.

"O look on me once again!—look on me, if it be but to curse and scorch me with the fiery wrath of those grand, indignant eyes that I fear more than God's; yet whose glance even as I quail before it, thrills me to the core with joy unspeakable."

Silence still; still the shrouded face, and hand stretched out to bid her go. The wretched girl throws herself at his feet again, kneeling before him in a passion of wild entreaty.

"Hate me! curse me! spurn me! if you will, but let me see once more the eyes that have been my ruin and my joy; the eyes whose kind glances made earth heaven, whose

cold ones changed it straightway to hell; the eyes that sleeping or waking, dying or living, will haunt and madden me evermore; Bertram—Bertram! it is not much to ask. And she forgave me—" She pauses, her voice choked in tears. Bertram's head sinks lower on his breast, his hand falls from his face; but he does not look at the suppliant. "Bertram!" (the full voice, hoarse and broken with sobs, rises scarce above a whisper) "if I had not loved so madly, I had not sinned so deeply—so deeply."

That man must needs be harder than steel, more impenetrable than iron, who can withstand the pleading of a woman's love and tears. For my part I don't believe such a man ever existed. From Delila and Samson to Merlin and Vivien the story has been the same; men whom nothing else could move, succumbing and melting utterly at the touch of soft lips, quick tears, and low-trailing hair upon their feet.

Bertram Messeter is not made of either steel or iron, on the contrary of a more than ordinarily tender compound of nerves, and flesh, and muscle.

He looks at her at last, and his own eyes, though stern and reproachful, are as full of tears as her own.

"Is it possible that what you call your *love* for me, has wrought this ruin,—my ruin—her death—your misery? Juliet, you have misnamed the cause—forgotten the reason. Say it was the prompting of some evil spirit—the persuasion of hell—the suggestion of the arch-fiend himself, but not *love*, the holiest feeling of human heart; the very essence of our immortal spirits. * * * * Love! O God, what mockery!" (turning away from Juliet, and speaking as if appealing to some imaginary presence). "She steals my fame, my honour, my best friend, my liberty; and then, when I stand denuded, hopeless, desperate, sur-

rounded by prison walls, she comes—she herself—crying and whispering at my feet, and declaring that she has done it all for *love*. If this be love, and these its manifestions, God save me from it!"

"Bertram, I was mad and jealous; jealous with a murderous, racking jealousy that ate my heart away night and day; that gave me no rest, no respite; that consumed my heart, andwas not satisfied, but cried out for revenge —for blood; suggesting ways and means, forming devilish plans, whispering of how your eyes would grow kind again when she was gone, she who poisoned your heart against me, who——"

"Hush, fool! dolt! idiot!—how dare you utter such a rank falsehood? She, of whom you are not worthy to speak, and whom I would not mention to you—but that when I tell you she was your true friend, your heart may bleed and smart with a yet deeper remorse, a still more bitter penitence.

She always spoke kindly of you to me. The last words she spoke that night before the play were kind, tender—even motherly."

A low wail of infinite regret breaks from the woman at his feet. He goes on unheeding, unpitying, determined that she shall know the truth at last: "You were jealous of her, you say—poor fool!" (the bitter scorn in his voice hurts her proud spirit, even more than the fury of his hatred). "Was it her pure, guileless heart you were jealous of? or her stainless wifehood—or the kind sisterly regard she bestowed on me—or the fond brotherly affection I felt for her?"

"You did not love her!"

Juliet has started erect, and is gazing at him with amazed, distended eyes and quivering, astonished lips. Bertram returns the gaze, and looking steadily into the wild questioning eyes, answers, "As a brother." Then as she still stands before

him, panting, confused, incredulous, he notices for the first time the blood upon her breast, where the dagger has grazed the skin, and taking a handkerchief from the bosom of his rough prison shirt, he proceeds gently, albeit half-mechanically, to wipe away the stain. In an instant, she is grovelling on the ground again—sobbing—protesting — kissing his feet, in a mad paroxysm of grief and gladness—triumph, and remorse. He looks at her in grave silence for a short space — then stooping and raising her with his hands, he bids her go. "Just now," he adds hurriedly, and not ungently, "I feel as if some day—some distant day, far away in the future, it might be possible for me to forgive you. It is only a mood; in half-an-hour it will have passed. Go! while I feel thus—go at once." Without reply—without a word, she folds her cloak about her. replaces the cowl (which has fallen back)

over her head, and proceeding to the door knocks loudly on it, which is the signal she has arranged on with the jailor, to let him know when her orisons with the prisoner should be finished. Almost immediately the key rattles in the lock—the heavy door swings open—shuts again with a ponderous crash, and Bertram is left alone, and at his feet Juliet's dagger is lying.

CHAPTER XII.

" She sighed for sleep, for sleep that would not hear,
But left her tossing still: for night and day
A mighty hunger yearned within her heart,
Till all her veins ran fever."—*(Sappho) Kingsley.*

JULIET had promised to let Dr. Marble know how her enterprise succeeded, and on the evening in question, he sits waiting restlessly and impatiently for some sign or message from her to inform him whether or no she has been able to carry out her daring plan. His time is valuable; even now his presence is urgently required at a sick bed, but he waits on, hoping every moment for a note to relieve his anxiety, or Juliet to come hurrying down the dusky street, breathless and agitated, from the perilous interview. Can she have come to some harm: been discovered and arrested?

A cold chill strikes through his heart at

the thought—a cold aching chill. He sits down rather astonished at his perturbation. He is unnerved he tells himself from recent events, besides he feels in a manner responsible for Juliet's safety. He put the idea of seeing Bertram into the girl's head, and he naturally experiences some anxiety as to the upshot of the undertaking. Poor girl! how eager she was about it to be sure, and how utterly careless of what should befall her, if only she could lighten by one feather's weight the burden that her own wild jealousy had laid on Bertram. "What an unfortunate love it is, this love of hers"—(he cogitates, rising and pacing up and down). Bertram will never—can never care for her. Under the most favourable influences, blessed by the most auspicious circumstances, I don't believe he would ever learn to love her. Their natures are too alike to amalgamate, and while the fervour and strength of his character draw

her to him irresistibly, the same qualities in her repel him from her. I remember him speaking of her to me once. We were dining together, and our talk ran on his fellow actors and actresses. There was one of the actresses who promised well, I remember him saying—a Mdlle. Juliet Venini—Good God! if I had only had an inkling of the anguish she was even then preparing for us, I would have risen up then and there to seek her life." (You would have done nothing of the sort, doctor—so you needn't think it. You must excuse him, dear reader. There is one man, Arthur Marble will never know—years of the closest intimacy have failed utterly to acquaint him with one character; days and hours of constant companionship have not enabled him to gauge the kindly depths of one true heart—and, I believe, that when this man is led in by shining angels through the Golden Gate, and the name of Arthur

Marble is echoed by a thousand voices in a shout of welcome—I believe that he will turn away from the crown they offer him, and tell them there must be some mistake. And I can fancy the honest flush on his fair cheek, and the half-glad, half-humble, wholly puzzled look in his clear blue eyes, when the record of his fair and noble life is read to convince him that the diadem and palm are his). "He pitied her; he said she was so lovely, and so beautiful—but so fierce and wayward it was impossible to like her, and then he blushed, and upset a glass of wine. I remember laughing at him, I ——." The doctor's reminiscences are brought to an abrupt conclusion by a loud knock at the door. Not doubting a moment but that it is Juliet, or a message from her, he rises and opens it, and admits his maid servant. "What the deuce——."

"Please sir, there's a woman who says she must see you; some one is dying."

"Tell her—"

What message the importunate patient was to be pacified with, I am unable to record, for as he utters the first two words, a woman, bonneted and cloaked, forces her way into the room, nearly upsetting the maid, and giving the doctor himself a vigorous prog with an umbrella she carries under her arm.

"My good woman," he begins, in mild remonstrance, but he is instantly greeted with such a torrent of French, he is obliged to hold his peace. She wants him to come with her at once; a girl, one of the boarders, is raving fearfully in high fever, or has been attacked with insanity, she cannot determine which. She has been obliged to lock her into her bedroom.

"Alone?" ejaculates the doctor, throwing the word recklessly into the turbulent stream of French verbiage.

"*Oui, oui, toute seule!* there was no one I dared leave with her; my husband is out, my daughter—a frightened child; what was there

to do, except to lock the door and run for the doctor. Ah, Monsieur is kind-hearted, he will not hesitate to give his assistance."

The woman is neither comely nor young, nor even clean, but the bleared eyes have tears of real distress in them, and the croakey old voice quavers with unfeigned emotion; and the young surgeon is not one to turn a deaf ear to the pleadings of mortal suffering, even when its voice issues hoarse and blatant from the gutter.

"I will come with you immediately," he answers promptly.

"You can follow me," says his visitress, tucking her umbrella under her arm, and preparing to depart; "for I'm in a hurry to get back to *pauvre* Mdlle. Juliet."

"Mdlle. Juliet!" The doctor catches the name in an instant. "Is that the name of the girl who is ill?" he asks eagerly.

"*Oui, oui certainement*, and it's a name which is familiar to many people, just now, worse luck!"

Dr. Marble is doubtless amongst the number; he has seen it in the papers, has heard it mentioned in connection with the horrible tragedy; but he is too kind, too generous to let that circumstance deter him."

While she has been rattling on, the doctor has been enveloping himself in his great coat and putting on his hat.

"Come along," he says, interrupting the flood of her eloquence at this juncture; "there is no time to be lost, you can lead the way, Madame— "

"Fanile!" The old lady puffs out the word with some difficulty, for the doctor's long, rapid stride, is taxing her short breath and stout proportions to the uttermost.

"Ah yes, Madame Fanile." He does not address her again, out of pity for the heavy breathing, so audible at his elbow. It is some distance from the doctor's house to the Rue de St. Marie, and when he and Madame Fanile arrived at their destination, the latter was in a

state of complete exhaustion. "You need not come up with me, if you will tell me the number of Mdlle. Juliet's room, I shall be able to find it," says the doctor compassionately, as his companion sinks on the first stair, panting and groaning with fatigue.

"There is no number, it is the top; the attic just at the top of the last flight," she gasps out.

Dr. Marble waits to hear no more, and in less than five minutes he is standing by Juliet's bed-side.

The girl is lying on her bed; she still has on the garb of a Sister of Mercy, only the cloak and band are thrown aside, and the beads and wooden cross she wore round her neck are scattered over the floor, and grate under the doctor's feet, as he stands beside her.

Just now she is lying tolerably quiet, only her head is moving restlessly from side to side, and her dry red lips are muttering.

Dr. Marble lays his cold hand on her hot

forehead, speaking soothingly to her. But neither the hand nor the voice have at all a quieting effect.

Her muttered talk becomes louder. She shakes off his hand.

"Don't look at me so—don't," she entreats, her dark eyes gazing with a frightened, unrecognising glance at the grave face above, "your eyes hurt me" (covering up her face and shuddering).

Then as the doctor lifts her wrist in his grasp to try and feel her fevered pulses, she starts up, crying out,—

"Kill me!—only kill me for pity's sake—for pity's sake."

He promises to do so, if she will lie down quietly, and as she sinks back again muttering and moaning, he makes his diagnosis to himself: "Violent attack of fever, brought on by undue excitement and fatigue, likely to turn to brain fever, symptoms inflammatory."

He lays down her hand and turns away;

there is not much to be done for her, but all he can do—he will. He will write a prescription for her at once and call again in the morning early.

As he is hastily jotting down the prescription, the door opens softly, and poor old Madame Fanile enters, still breathing rather hard, with a face the colour of an October sunset.

"What is it Doctor, what ails the poor dear?" she demands in a stage whisper, going close up to him.

"An attack of fever."

The poor woman clasps her hands in tragic dismay.

"My other boarders!" she gasps.

"It is not catching," remarks the doctor, coolly.

"But fever! that word alone will send them flying to the ends of the earth."

"Then don't speak it."

"But they will ask—they will find out—they will hear her ravings."

"Nonsense! she is too far away, they are not likely to come and listen outside the door."

"She could not be moved, it is not possible?" (interrogatively).

"Of course it is possible, if you hire a fly and get some one to carry her down stairs, and put her into it."

"Would it hurt her?—make her worse?" glancing at the helpless, tossing form.

"Probably it would kill her, but then, she has no friends?"

"Not one! not one in the vast city; she is alone—quite alone."

"That, of course, greatly simplifies matters," remarks the doctor, folding up the bit of paper he has been writing on: "for if you want to turn her out of your house (and indeed I do not doubt for a moment it being the wisest thing to do), there will be no one to say you nay, or to make a fuss if consequences are fatal, and there is a hospital close at hand."

Madame Fanile's intellect is too obtuse, and her heart too true, to take in the meaning of the doctor's words at once.

"I don't think I quite understand Monsieur," she says humbly, turning her greasy red face inquiringly towards him. "He says, to move Mdlle. Juliet would be injurious; and at the same time, and because she has no friends, he says, it is the best thing to do. I have not understood."

"I will put it plainer. If you keep Mdlle. Juliet in your house you will be almost certain to lose some of your boarders. If you turn her out you will lose nothing, and she will be almost certain to lose her life, which is not of much value to her or anybody else. And I, of course, advise you to do what is best for yourself."

"Then Monsieur may keep his advice to himself!" rejoins Madame Fanile, indignantly, while a light akin to that which flashes on the brows of the white-robed multitude shines

over her old, wrinkled, sensual face, transforming it for a moment, almost to beauty. "And he has blundered much, if he has thought Madame Fanile would turn Mdlle. Juliet into the street to her death, for the sake of fifty boarders."

The young surgeon holds out his hand, and a kindly, genial smile plays over his frank face.

"Will you forgive me, Madame Fanile, for even hinting such a thing. It is so hard to know the true coin from the counterfeit. I'm afraid I applied rather a mean test, but I'm quite satisfied now. I know the ring of the true metal when I hear it."

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT HAS COME TO THE DOCTOR?

A BATTLE has been fought — a grim and ghastly battle, in the little attic chamber of No. 54, in the Rue de St. Marie. Day and night it has waged and waned with dull uncertainty of issue. Life and death, those two mighty wrestlers, have once more tried their respective prowess in a breathless, deadly close. This time the stronger has been vanquished, the dread black knight with his vizor down, has been put to flight. It has been a "near go" though, a very "near go." The fair, comely knight, with the blazoned shield, lies faint and wounded, and almost as pale as his ghastly foe. Perhaps it has not been altogether a fair trial of strength between the two champions this time, for all through the

struggle two faithful seconds have stood by the fair knight, bathing his wounds, sustaining him with reviving wines when exhausted, and even on one occasion, when the strife was hottest and he tottered and fell to the ground before his dark opponent, they advanced, and standing over his prostrate form, received on their protecting arms the savage blows aimed at his heart. As for the black knight, he had no one on his side, never so much as an encouraging word or a drop of water was flung to him during the bitter conflict.

"By Jove! it has been a near thing, a regular stand up fight between the two veterans, but life has won the day, Madame Fanile; between us we've beaten the enemy of mankind out of the field," remarks Dr. Marble, in a cheerful whisper, as he stands watching Juliet sleeping the first sweet sleep of convalescence.

"Bless her!" responds Madame Fanile, also in a whisper; "it does one's heart good to look at her slumbering like an infant after all

the pain, and restlessness, and fear she has gone through. It is to Monsieur that she owes her life—to Monsieur under the good God, and will Monsieur forgive a stupid old woman who does not know how to say things properly, but who wants to tell him she is so grateful to him for his kindness and attention to Mdlle. Juliet—so grateful."

The whisper becomes choked and dies away in a kind of gurgle.

The doctor lays on her arm.

"Hush, hush!" he says, softly; and there is a half-shamed face, half-pleased flush on his frank face. "Mdlle. Juliet owes her life quite as much to your unremitting care as to my skill. Come down stairs, for she must not be disturbed, and I have some directions to give you."

He steals on tip-toe from the room, followed noiselessly by Madame Fanile, who does not, however, adopt the doctor's hushed attitude of progression, as she has long since

discarded her down-trodden slippers, being impressed with the notion that silence is one of the chief requisites of the sick room.

In silence they proceed down the five flights of stairs—down right into the kitchen, and there the doctor gives his orders and advice at his ease.

"I cannot do much for our patient now," he announces, to begin with, seating himself carelessly on the corner of the deal table.

"Well, I'm sure, you've done the chief thing, you've saved her life, and there's nothing more any one can do for us than that," says Madame Fanile, standing before him with meekly folded hands.

He goes on without noticing her observation; he has got rather into the habit during the last week of looking upon the worthy old woman's passing remarks as the natural phenomena of a garrulous temperament, and listening to them with much the same attention one accords to the singing of boiling

water, or the fizzing, spluttering noise that issues from the fire when one has thrown therein a candle-end.

"She must have some light, nourishing food, when she wakes. You must make her eat something, it does not much signify what, beef-tea, corn flour, thick milk gruel with a glass of wine—by-the-by, I suppose you have no wine?"

"No, not exactly in the house, but Lissette can run round in two minutes for a bottle."

"No, it is not necessary at present, brandy will do at present; but she must have some soon—good Burgundy."

"Yes, Monsieur, I will let Mons. Bastile know—he was here only yesterday, asking if Mdlle. Juliet wanted for anything, and desiring me to send to him if she did, as she was, in a way, under his protection, besides a real treasure to him as an actress."

"She belongs to his Dramatic Company?" asks the doctor, somewhat shortly.

"Yes, she is somehow apprenticed to him for a year or two. Mdlle. Juliet herself told me all about it one day, but I forget exactly."

Here the doctor slides off the table with the remark that he "must be off," and with a parting injunction to Madame Fanile to mind his patient has something to eat as soon as she wakes, he makes his exit from the kitchen, bounds up the flight of stairs, takes up his hat from the hall table, and passes into the street. The day is bleak and cold, the doctor has not yet had any luncheon, though it is nearly four o'clock, and he was called up at five this morning, and yet he is whistling—positively whistling, like a great happy school boy, as he walks along. He does not know why he is so light-hearted; as soon as he becomes aware of the plough boy propensity he is indulging in, he checks it abruptly, asking himself reproachfully how he can have the

heart to be so gay when poor Berty is sailing away to Cayenne among a set of infernal convicts. No! he does not know why he is so light-hearted; he only knows that a face—a certain girlish face, which the flush and the trouble of fever have left preternaturally white, and touchingly calm, haunts him throughout the day; floats before him distractingly as he sits patiently listening to the tedious details of elderly spinsters complaints—comes to him comfortingly as he stands by heart-rending death-beds. Safe!—safe on the pleasant earth still! and then he shudders as he looks down into the dark gulf of death, to think how nearly—how very nearly that same white face was to being lost and shrouded forever from his gaze in its gloomy depths.

After a day of more than usual fatigue and anxiety, he seeks his couch at length; and as he stretches his wearied limbs, and closes his aching eyes in the delicious relaxation

of mind and muscle that precedes the sleep of the tired, the vision that has been with him all day, appears to him once again. A face calm and white, and wasted, pressed against a pillow in the stillness of a child-like slumber.

"Thank God!" he murmurs, between sleeping and waking, while his heavy lids grow moist with a strange wistful gladness. "Thank God! I have saved her life a second time."

I have read somewhere, that we have as much reason to be thankful to God for the prayers He does *not* grant, as for those He does. Our poor short-sighted petitions, full of the passion and desire of the moment, are perhaps demanding our own destruction. We can see such a little way—we can know absolutely nothing of the mysterious future, about which we raise such imploring hands. Poor prayers! poor ignorant, unwise, mistaken prayers! that

arise daily and hourly from the team and toil of this sin-sick earth. Surely God's mercy is great to turn a deaf ear to your wearisome repetitions, and give instead of the stones we ask, the bread provided by his own omnipotent wisdom. But alas! if our petitions go so astray—how about our praise and thanksgiving? Behold our lives are to be laid waste—our pleasant things destroyed—the mandate has gone forth; the instrument that is to work our ruin—to blast our happiness, is hurled to earth—and lo! we rise up gladly—yea, very gladly to receive it, and fold it to our heart and name it our blessing—and then to put the finishing touch to our blind idiotcy, we kneel down, perhaps for the first time in our lives, and thank God for his *good gift.*

"Thank God!" Arthur Marble mutters as he sinks to sleep; and the thanksgiving is wafted to Heaven and laid aside reverently

and sadly amongst the unanswered prayers and mistaken praises of earth's unwary ones.

The next day sees him again by Juliet's bedside. The girl is better—has improved during his twenty-four hours absence more than he could have hoped. She was never one to linger long over anything, and her convalescence promises to be as rapid as a quick vigorous constitution can make it. She lies propped up by pillows, looking very shadowy and white; yet from the thick-lashed eyes the langour and heaviness of sickness have already passed away, and they return the doctor's gaze of kindly interest with their old directness and clearness of vision.

"You are much better," he remarks, taking her thin soft hand in his.

He has not spoken to her since her illness except to soothe her delirious restlessness, or question her concerning her malady; and now that she is better and able to answer

any questions he may ask about her visit to Bertram, a sudden shyness comes over him, an inexplicable embarrassment, and his hand trembles so as he holds hers—he is obliged to lay the little frail hand down for fear she should notice it.

"Much better, thank you," she says softly, and there is a ring of real gratitude in her low, weak voice.

"We shall soon have you about again now—you always did things quickly you know. I'm sure you wont take long to regain your strength.

"No! I shall not take long; I'm quite well now—only a little weak. I want to thank you Dr. Marble" (turning to the young surgeon and holding out her hand) "for all your kindness and attention to me since I have been ill. It is only noble natures that can return good for evil—such evil as I have done. This is the second time you have saved my life."

"Thank God!" the doctor ejaculates, as in a sudden impulse of love and pity, he presses his lips to the little hand he holds in his.

The girl looks at him wonderingly, and the quick tears of bodily weakness start to her eyes.

"You are kind, very kind," she says faintly, "but do you think, after all, my recovery is a thing to thank God for?"

"Hush! you have talked enough for to-day. Of course your life is something to be thankful for; but I'll talk more to you about that, some other day—good-bye."

The doctor rises hastily, clasps the weak, white hand once more, and goes towards the door.

He is just closing it behind him when her voice arrests him.

"Dr. Marble!"

Very faintly, very weakly his name reaches him. He pokes his head in again.

"Did you call?"

"Yes" (motioning him to come nearer); "I want to tell you—don't you wish to hear ?" she stammers painfully, and a crimson flush creeps over her transparently white face, like the blood-red light of dawn tinging a lily-bell.

The doctor, as he stands gravely by her bedside, notes the transforming blush, and nervous hesitancy, but will not help her.

"Don't I want to hear what ?"

"About—about my visit to the prison, to——"

"Yes. Of course I want to hear all about it," he interrupts quickly; "but I cannot allow you to talk any more to-day; you shall tell me to-morrow," and before she has time to say another word, he goes.

"What has come to the doctor," Juliet wonders, as she sinks back wearily on her pillows. "He kissed my hand, too. I suppose he wants to show me that he bears no malice. O how tired I am of this little room, and this

everlasting bed, and Madame Fanile's greasy face! I wish I could be perfectly strong and well to-morrow, or die quietly in the night."

And the old, impatient spirit looks restlessly out of the hollow eyes, looks out all unsubdued at the bit of wintry sky visible through the low attic-window.

"Well, my dear," says Madame Fanile, entering with her silent tread and heavy breathing; "what did the doctor say to you to-day?"

"He said I was better—would soon be well." Juliet speaks quietly, but her dark, shorn head, burrows impetuously in the pillows.

"He went right away without speaking to me, or giving me any directions about you," remarks the old lady, somewhat aggrievedly; "he has never done so before. I shouldn't have known he had been, only that Lisette cried out a minute since that she saw him

flying past the window like mad; you were not rude to him were you dear?"

"No, no!"

"You must excuse my mentioning it, dear, but you know you are pettish sometimes, it is the sickness. Is he coming to-morrow?"

"Yes. I think I could sleep a little," says Juliet, making use of the invalid's legitimate artifice to escape annoying conversation.

"Well, I will leave you in peace; let me just arrange your pillows before I go," and as the old woman stoops over the girl to raise her head, she whispers good-naturedly, "*Eh petite*, you have fairly turned the doctor's head for all you are so pale and shorn, *pauvre jeune homme*!"

"What do you mean?" Juliet interrupts with sudden passion, flinging away the landlady's arm; "how dare you speak to me like that?"

The insinuation grates upon her feelings horribly, for the young doctor has been kind

to her; his kindness has touched the better part of her nature, and for that reason it is precious to her as the last rope that holds a drowning man from his death.

"*La, la, qu'est ce que c'est donc ?*" exclaims Madame Fanile, in unfeigned dismay at her patient's outburst of anger.

"Leave me! your gossiping chatter is insufferable," desires Juliet, with eyes still flashing, and lips still quivering with anger.

"That I will" (some emphasis), "and if you were well and strong, Mdlle. Juliet, I don't know that I should come back again very quickly, but as it is I can make allowance for your temper, sick people are not accountable, so to speak, the mind gets—the mind gets ill with the body."

Then, as Juliet sinks down, white and faint from agitation, the good-natured old creature approaches her again, and persuading her to drink some wine and water, gives her a motherly kiss of forgiveness and departs.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Canst say whence love arises ?
'Tis *that* none ever *knew* !"

HIS REWARD.

WHAT has come to the doctor ? So Juliet had wondered in the morning, and the doctor as he sits by his slowly dying fire, with deep-flushed cheeks, and a bright, almost feverish light in his clear blue eyes, the same evening, puts the identical question to himself.

"What has come to me ?"

His mind is in a tumult, his thoughts bewildered and bewildering, and ever and anon, he utters amazedly and fearfully—

"What has come to me ?"

What is the meaning of this change that has come over him—that has been coming over him during the last week of anxious dread.

He has called it many names—he has assigned to it various and obtuse reasons, yet

that none of them have satisfied his puzzled inner consciousness, or given rest to the tormenting perplexity of his heart, is proved by the helpless —almost pitiful reiteration of the above question.

"What an awful fool the man must be not to know he's in love," I think I hear the reader say, with the scant courtesy and absence of ceremony with which a novelist's characters are generally discussed. "What a born idiot —how ridiculously unnatural. To thank God for her recovery—to kiss her hand —to shake—positively to shake—with the force of his passion in her presence, and not to know he is in love! Pooh! the character is out of drawing—it is grotesque—it is monstrous!" and down goes the book. Pick it up, dear reader, just for a moment; re-open it, and peruse the following paradox: Dr. Marble knows he is in love. Knows it in the "undimmed" depths of his heart, where the garish light of human reason cannot dazzle,

nor the wandering shades of human doubt distract. He knows that he (Dr. Marble) loves Juliet Venini, as the Darwinians know their souls are immortal, with a knowledge deeper than conviction, more profound than thought.

"What can have come over me?" he rises wearily, stretches himself, and pushes back the thick chestnut hair from his comely brow. "It's time for bed; I don't feel much like sleep. How white she looks still, I felt so sorry for her this morning as she lay there helpless and quiet as a babe, and she used to be so strong. She wanted to tell me about Bertram. She did see him * * * wonder if she loves him still, I'll ask her all about it, to-morrow—don't know what came over me to-day. Can't think—hope I'm not getting nervous in my old age."

The young surgeon laughs a little to himself at the idea — and his thoughts wander off to other subjects. Soon, how-

ever, the image never long absent from his mind, returns.

"I shall see her again to-morrow. I must go early to-morrow. Hope it will be fine to-morrow. The wet weather depresses her. In her present state it is important for her to be cheerful. We'll have a long talk to-morrow. I shall see her before ten to-morrow."

So he goes to see her on the morrow, and on many morrows, and continues loving blindly, and blindly loving, and consciously unhappy, and unconsciously happy for many days, until—until one day a revelation comes.

Juliet is dressed to-day for the first time since her illness, and sitting near her attic window in an easy chair that Madame Fanile has had brought up from the *salle à manger*, on purpose for her, she awaits her doctor's last visit. She is going to tell him to-day

that it must be his last visit. She has been collecting all her little stock of money to pay him for his attendance on her during the last four weeks. It is not nearly sufficient, she feels afraid, as she counts it out, five pounds ten shillings and sixpence. However, she will ask him if he will wait a month or so for the full amount. By that time she will have earned some more.

The bright February sun shines in at the window upon her bowed head, with its dark ringlets shorn and thin. She is feeling very weak still. Her recovery has not been nearly so rapid as was at first predicted by the doctor. Just now her head is bowed, because her eyes are full of tears—tears brought there by the comforting warmth of the sun, and her return to the weariness and loneliness of the life she would have quitted so gladly; and perhaps, who knows? by the thought of parting with the kindly, gentle friend who has stood by her with

such a pitying patience in her stress of pain and weakness.

"God bless him!" she murmurs with the tender sick-hearted gratitude of one who has received benefits from a human being, that can no more be repaid than the bountiful goodness of heaven—and then she bows her head lower, for she hears the door open and knows the man whom she has prayed God to bless, is standing by her.

"Are you not so well to-day?" he asks, after a minute's silence, during which she has kept her head bent, that he may not see her tears.

She cannot answer him, the kind voice trembling a little with sheer tenderness, unnerves her utterly; hands and arms, and poor shorn head go down on the window seat—and Juliet bursts into tears.

It is the first time Dr. Marble has seen her weep, and the sight moves him powerfully. A great longing seizes him to take

her in his arms and kiss away her tears, and hush her sobs against his breast.

The young surgeon is no weakling—no passion-swayed fool; he possesses a large share of manly self-control, and though he pales a little as he stands by the weeping girl, he neither moves nor speaks.

It is she who speaks first, looking up at him when the violence of her crying has abated—with the tear drops glistening on her thick lashes like a summer night's dew on the shrouded petals of a passion flower.

"Forgive me! I am hardly myself yet; the rôle of the highly-strung and hysterical female was never one I cared to play."

She speaks lightly but her voice is still low and husky, and she trys to smile, but her quivering lips refuse the task.

Dr. Marble sits down, he has mastered his emotion—quelled for the nonce the riot in his heart. He sits by her side, pale, still,

and "holding passion in a leash," but outwardly calm and self-possessed as usual.

"You had better not try to talk just yet," he says, quietly — a little abruptly Juliet thinks.

"But I have a good deal to tell you," she persists, choking back her sobs and swallowing down her tears as only resolute women can. "And this is most likely the last time I shall see you."

"The last time ——."

There is a pause: the doctor looks at the young face upturned to his—haggard as it is with sickness—stained as it is with tears, and becomes aware that if he is to look on it no more, it would be well for him if he could cast away his youth and strength, and lie him down and die in this little dingy garret.

The last time! three little words constituting the sorrowfullest clause in human phraseology: potent by reason of its supreme and hopeless sadness to dismask truth, and

destroy artifice. A moan wrung from the pain of our mortality—before which pride breaks, hatred wanes, and love rising up and shaking off his fetters claims his own in a *last* embrace.

"The last time!" he says, and then he is silent, looking down awed into the dim depths of passion in his soul those three words have discovered to him.

"I've been looking over the contents of my purse this morning," Juliet says, at length, a little nervously—for there is an intangible *something* in the doctor's gaze—in his manner—in his silence, which though she does not give it a name, her woman's heart interprets well enough," and find I'm grieved to say, that I cannot muster nearly sufficient of the '*needful*,' don't you call it? to repay you for your medical assistance. I shall soon be able to earn some more now, and then—will you tell me how much short the amount is" (holding out the five

pounds towards him in her wasted hand), "I don't know your charges——."

The doctor does not answer, nor does he take any notice of her outstretched hand—he turns away, strong man as he is—trembling from head to foot.

She lays her hand upon his arm.

"I do not know ——."

"No, you do not know," he repeats hoarsely, still turning away—"You do not know."

"But I shall know if you tell me," she persists, half-wondering, half-frightened at his agitation. "Will you tell me please, how much?"

"Better than anything 'in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth.'"

He has been trying to sound the sea of his passion, to learn the length and breadth of his love—fathomless—measureless, he can find no fitter expression for it than

the old Bible words learned at his mother's knee.

Juliet does not ask what he means—does not affect for a moment to misunderstand the rather ambiguous sentence. The kind eyes that have watched over her so faithfully, are looking into hers now and speaking to them in a language compared to which, articulation though it be of sentences pregnant with subtlest meaning, passionate phrases warm from the poet's heart, is mere sound and fury, signifying nothing. Actress as she is, she cannot dissemble before the tender, rueful gaze of those honest blue eyes; her own droop beneath them, and her white, white cheeks crimson, not with the pleased blush of gratified vanity, but with the pained, uneasy flush of regretful solicitude. She does not know what to do with this costly thing lying at her feet—this most precious of all earth's treasures—a true and guileless heart. She dare not pick it up, it is not hers; she cannot repel

it, it is sacred; she is afraid to touch it, she is not worthy. She feels like a child who, by some mistake, has been given a beautiful ornament of rare and fragile workmanship, and is afraid either to play with it, or take it up in its awkward little fingers to put it back on its shelf for fear of breaking it.

There is much good in this girl's nature still, much that is generous and unselfish; the blasting, baleful influence of uncontrolled passion, has not as yet destroyed, although it has terribly perverted the natural instincts of a noble character.

"Juliet" (his arm encircles the drooping figure unmolested), "have you nothing to give me in return—not a little love—just a little?" Juliet is silent still; silent not from girlish shyness, but from womanly compunction. "Juliet, I love you!" he whispers, his chest heaving, his breath coming and going in great panting sobs.

The girl rouses herself; this cannot go on. It is cruel kindness to delay.

"I'm sorry—so sorry." The old stereotyped phrase that women are so fond of employing as they send the bitter arrow of refusal home—the conventional form of polite rejection. "I'm sorry—very sorry," and there's no more to be said; so the arrow speeds, bringing an added pang, perhaps, to the true heart it enters, by reason of the false gloss of spurious compassion which covers it.

This does not apply to Juliet; the girl means what she says, and there is real, unfeigned regret in her deep eyes, as she raises them to the flushed, agitated face, so close to hers.

"I am so sorry."

"You mean you don't care for me."

"I care for you very much, Dr. Marble, and am very grateful for all your kindness, but——"

"Do you *still* love Bertram?"

The doctor asks the question abruptly, sharply; men are not apt to mind their manners when in mortal suspense and pain.

The girl disengages herself from his arm and rises to her feet, shuddering and paling—paling even to her lips.

The doctor rises too, and as she stands white and trembling before him, he puts his arm round her again for he is afraid she is about to faint and fall.

"How can you ask?" she mutters, and all the kindliness and compassion vanish from her face, leaving it set and rigid as marble. "*Love him still!* I have damned my soul for his sake, yet if God were to send me a new soul, and a fresh chance of heaven to-night, I would criminate the one and forego the other to purchase one hour of his presence—one tone of his voice—one touch of his hand!"

The doctor keeps his arm round her, despite her mad, blasphemous words, despite her shameless protestation, despite her knitted brow and flashing eyes.

"You are so young," he says yearningly, "I will take care of you and protect you, and teach you, and in time you will forget——"

"Fool!" she cries, springing from him, all the worse part of her nature stirred, all the dregs seething to the top in the ferment and heat of her unholy passion. "You know not what you say—*forget*. Can the devils in torment forget the flames that consume them? if so I can forget the love—no it is not love—not the sentiment you designate as love, it is something more awful, more intense, more fervent, there is no name for it, it is madness, it is——"

She stops abruptly, gasping for breath, and stretching out her hands for support, all her feeble strength exhausted by the vehemence of her agitation.

He approaches her again for the third time, for the third time his arms encircle her. He does not remonstrate—he does not speak—in silence he conducts her to her chair—in silence he watches her, as she lies back in it, with closed eyes, faint and panting.

After awhile, finding she does not revive, he

dips a towel in cold water and wipes her lips and brow, and gives her brandy and water to drink. Perhaps the gentle touch of the hands that have ministered so faithfully to her, revives her feeling of gratitude by recalling past services; perhaps the unwonted sadness in the manly face she has welcomed and watched for so often during the past few weeks, touches her wild heart, for after opening her eyes languidly, and gazing for a little space at the young doctor, her face softens, her mouth quivers, and she holds out her hand to him with a piteous deprecatory smile.

"You see, it is not much worth having what you want. You are too kind, too gentle, too *humane* to be the keeper of a wild beast."

Then as he takes her hand in his, and strokes it with the tender patience of grieved love, she snatches it from him, and bows her face upon it.

"O Doctor Marble! is it possible you can care

for me after all I have done—is it possible—*is it possible?*"

A month ago Doctor Marble would have laughed in utter scorn if any one had hinted at the most remote possibility of his ever caring for Juliet; nay, he would have been angry, indignant, hurt at the insinuation, as implying a certain disloyalty to his friend; and now, as the girl herself asks him the question, he bends over her, assuring her in lover-like language that not only is it *possible* but an actual fact that he cares for her more than any in the wide world. O Love, thou wonderful magician! What malicious fairy of ancient legend ever effected such astounding transformations as thou? What mischievous Mercury of merry pantomine ever played such unaccountable tricks? What god-mother of fantastic nursery rhyme ever brought to pass such grand impossibilities?"

"Doctor Marble," the girl interrupts him at last, raising her head and looking at him

fixedly; "do you love this friend of yours, Bertram Messeter?"

"Of course, of course, he was, is, the dearest friend I possess."

"Have you forgotten that I have spoiled this man's life, the life of the dearest friend you possess?"

"I have forgotten nothing," he answers doggedly, his face contracting with pain and perplexity.

"Then how is it, you don't hate the sight of me?"

A very practical question, Mdlle. Juliet, but one not easy to answer, as the information it demands, necessitates the solution of a problem that has never yet been solved, perhaps I ought to say *satisfactorily* solved, for I believe some conceited, pedantic theories have been advanced from time to time, as to the influence involved in adducing a phase of feeling known commonly as "being in love," but which have as yet signally failed in dis-

covering cause and effect, as regards the master-passion. It is a mystery as deep as life, as hidden as heaven. It is the main-spring of creation, whose workings are concealed in the bowels of the earth, whose secret forces will never be known until the Hand that fashioned the grand machine, reveal the complexities and perplexities of its wondrous structure.

Dr. Marble, as may be imagined, does not enter into a scientific discussion, as to why he does not "hate the sight of Juliet." He leaves the metaphysical side of the question alone. One can hardly blame him, physics are not interesting at such moments. When life is burning with unusual intensity in any one part of the body, it leaves the other parts somewhat languid, and strengthless. The brain and the heart never work well together. Just now the doctor's life is in his heart, and from his heart he speaks.

"How do I know? what do I care to know,

my darling? surely it argues my love to be true, as I love you despite it all, and more than all."

"I am a murderess!"

"Hush, hush, you pain me when you speak like that; it was an impulse—a mad impulse—you were not yourself."

Juliet is silent. It is clearly useless trying to argue the doctor out of his love for her, as useless as trying to show a man suffering from colour blindness, the defects in a faulty painting. She is silent, and he is silent, thinking "how to take leave of all he loves." Many minutes—a quarter of an hour passes while he sits thinking. He is dizzy and confused with love and pain; and through the dimness and tumult, he hears the inexorable voice of duty bidding him "say farewell, and go." He rises up at length in obedience to the voice, he has never knowingly defied.

"I must go * * * I must say good-bye to you Juliet."

All the healthy colour leaves his fair bronzed face, he is as ghastly as the girl before him, who has so lately wrestled with death.

"Good-bye, Doctor Marble, I will never forget your kindness" (then for the second time she holds out the last five pounds she possesses and begs him to take it). "It is all I have, and it will not nearly repay you, but I will soon have some, and then I can send the remainder."

"How are you going to live in the meantime?—you will not be able to act for the next month."

"I have already another engagement. Mons. Bastile was here yesterday to see how I was getting on; to-morrow night I reappear on the stage again."

"To-morrow night?—you are not fit."

"Ah, you don't know how strong I am still, but for that, I believe I could act were I dying. I forget myself, there comes to me a strength

like inspiration; no matter how tired, how sorrowful I am before the curtain is up, as soon as I stand before the footlights, it has passed away; I feel no longer any pain, nor grief of my own, I am then another person."

"Do you intend to continue in the profession?" the doctor asks, for the sake of saying something. He has taken her hand, but not the money it holds, and is pressing it close to his person.

Juliet can feel the strong, agitated beats of his heart.

"Only for two months," she says, and her eyes droop suddenly.

She tries to draw away her hand. He will not permit it; his grasp tightens.

"What are you going to do then?" he asks quickly. She is silent; again she tries to free her hand. He holds it firmly. "What are you going to do then? Juliet, won't you tell me?" he asks again more in a tone of command, than entreaty.

"I—I don't exactly know," she stammers, turning away her head.

After all a man, with any manhood in him, is more than a match for the strongest woman.

"You *do* know; you have formed some plan. God knows how foolish, how wild—and I *will* know it."

There is a horrible fear in his heart that the girl who is dearer to him than his life is about to plunge into some sin, or shame, from which even his love will be powerless to save her.

He is resolved not to quit her until he knows the worst.

"You *will* know it," Juliet repeats defiantly; but her voice falters, for she feels the mastery of his brave young manhood.

"I will know."

She laughs with a kind of nervous recklessness.

"Then you shall know" (a dare-devil

light coming into her dark eyes, as she raises them to his). "It is a little plan that will not please you. I am going to America."

"To America! what for?"

He is thinking so much of her, that for a moment the fact of Bertram being in the New World, does not occur to him.

She laughs again, a laugh that hurts and shocks him.

"You cannot guess: perhaps to impose upon myself a banishment that justly speaking I should have been sentenced to sometime since, but which by mistake was passed on some one else—who ——."

"You are going to Bertram Messeter."

He lets go her hand—he turns away for a moment; so potent is jealousy, he almost hates the man who is the careless recipient of a love he would willingly lay down his life to possess. The feeling is but momentary, Dr. Marble is no black-browed Cain, but an honest Christian gentleman, and as such, and

looking such, he turns to the girl with a kind light in his blue eyes, and unselfish words on his true lips,

"My poor girl, what good will it do you, or him? You will not be permitted to see him."

Juliet is unutterably surprised at the mild inquiry, the compassionate tone. She has confidently expected a storm to follow on the announcement of her intention. Judging the doctor by herself, she has prepared for passionate remonstrance—bitter upbraiding—scornful epithets. His undreamed of gentleness, moves her—astonishes her.

"I shall *contrive* to see him," she mutters almost inaudibly, turning away her head.

"How?"

"They want women out there" (speaking low, and with evident difficulty); "convict nurses—the work is rough—few apply. I shall easily obtain ——."

"You, Juliet! you don't know what you are

talking about; you don't know what a fiendish set you would have to mix with; you don't know how coarse, how hard, how degrading your duties."

"No, I don't know, and I don't care!" Juliet interrupts in her turn, "Dr. Marble," I cannot suffer *more* than I have already suffered for his sake. If I could, I would, but I know it is not possible. Since that night, I have endured the tortures of the damned—a very hell of remorse has been burning here" (pressing her hands passionately to her heaving bosom). "She forgave me before she died, then why does she come to me at night all ghastly white as I saw her last, and pointing—pointing ever to the dagger in her breast; and when I try to draw it, the red blood rushes over me, saturating me—staining me from head to foot. O God! O God!"

She covers her face with her hands, shuddering and panting as if the fearful

night-mare she describes is even now oppressing her.

The doctor is silent—a fear occurs to him (not for the first time) that the terrible strain on the girl's mind is likely to effect her reason, if it has not done so already.

Presently she is calmer—her shuddering ceases—her breathing grows quiet. Once more she addresses the young surgeon. "I am sorry to have alluded to it; but now, perhaps, you will understand the *physical* suffering entailed by hard work, coarse food, over-tasked strength, will be a real boon to me. It is only that I may be near him, that I wish to go. Rough words, bitter, thankless labour, are what I merit; and I fancy that to incur them will relieve in a slight degree the dread remorse that weighs me down, and even—even if I do not see him, I shall perhaps be able to serve him, and help him, and comfort him ——."

Her words die away in a whisper and

great tears roll quickly down her white cheeks.

The doctor takes her hands in his, and kisses first one and then the other. Despite his heart-sickness, despite the aching hopelessness that takes hold of him as she speaks, he cannot help admiring the brave, fervent constancy of her love. He attempts no more remonstrance, nor persuasion.

"Good-bye! Juliet, you must write and let me know what you finally decide on. I shall always be ready to help and comfort you—full as ready as you are to serve," (his voice falters, but he goes on again, almost immediately) "serve him. As a doctor, a recommendation from me will perhaps be of use to you in obtaining the—the situation you desire—you will let me know when you want my help—good-bye—good-bye."

Juliet does not answer. She but dimly comprehends the greatness of the heart she

has rejected. She is but vaguely conscious of the grandeur of the soul that has bowed before her, but she sees and understands the strange, pitiful anguish in the brave blue eyes that have always looked so kindly on her, and in an impulse of affectionate regret, she holds up her quivering lips to his.

"Kiss me good-bye," she says, "you have been my best friend."

End of Vol. I.